

THE NATIONAL GALLERY:
A ROOM TO ROOM GUIDE

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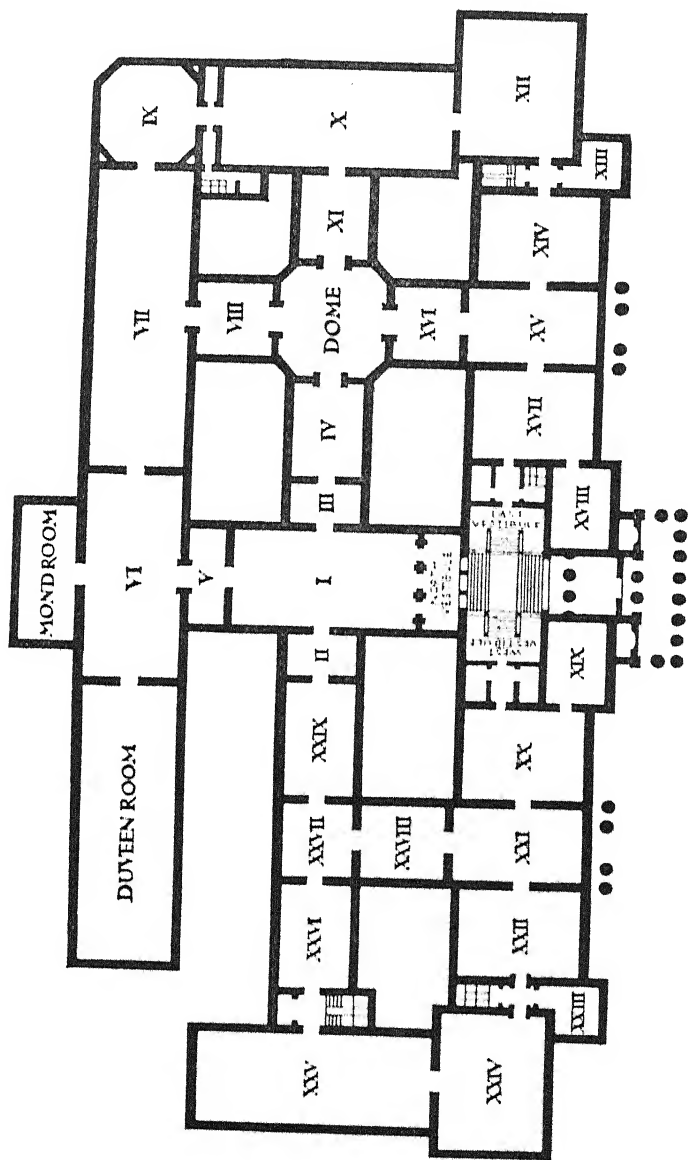
BY
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‘Artem non odit nisi ignarus.’



INTRODUCTORY NOTES

A FEW preliminary remarks about the contents and arrangement of the National Gallery will, perhaps, be of use to the reader.

(i) The pictures in the National Gallery are hung according to **Schools**. Taken in a general sense, the word **School** is synonymous with the nationality of the painter or with the country in which he lived and worked. Therefore, we have the **British School**, **Dutch and Flemish Schools**, **French School**, **Italian School** and others.

Taken in a more literal sense, the word **School** may denote the artist's workshop in which his assistants learned their trade. The productions of these apprentices may, therefore, be labelled **School of Botticelli**, **School of Rubens**, etc., according to the artist under whose direction the work was undertaken.

(ii) The '**Italian School**', being the largest and most important school of painting, is divided into a group of smaller schools according to the part of Italy in which the artist worked. We have, then, the **Sienese School**, the **Venetian School**, the **Florentine and Umbrian Schools** and so on.

(iii) The pictures in the National Gallery are painted either in **Oil Medium** or **Tempera**. **Tempera** is a preparation of colours diluted with yolk or white of egg and water and was used principally by the Early Italian Masters, from the thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries; it can usually be distinguished from the more sophisticated medium of oil painting by its flatter and more archaic appearance. **Tempera** is scarcely ever

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

used to-day, although there is a small society of artists who are trying to encourage its revival.

(iv) The National Gallery possesses **no Water-colour Painting**, with the exception of the Turner Collection bequeathed to the Nation by the artist. This collection is exhibited in the Gallery in rotation and part of it is always on view in Room XXIII.

(v) The pictures in the National Gallery are sometimes moved from room to room. Each picture, however, has a number which is never altered, though the title may be changed or the picture re-baptized. On occasion, a picture may have been taken downstairs to the Reference Section where, on application, it can always be seen by any member of the public who is interested in it.

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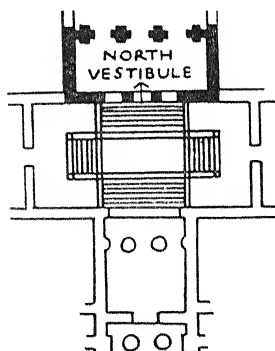
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ROOMS I TO VII
ALSO DOME SECTION AND
VESTIBULE

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ROOMS I TO VII

ALSO DOME SECTION AND VESTIBULE



THE earliest pictures in the National Gallery are the **Greco-Roman Portraits** which hang on the east wall of the North Vestibule. These dim reflections of classical painting—a sphere of art almost entirely lost to us—were the work of Egyptian artisans living in Alexandria in the third century A.D. (A.D. 40–250), the period known as Greco-Roman. The paintings had an obsequial destiny and were fixed into the interior of mummy cases to serve as memorial portraits. The embalmed bodies of the dead were wrapped in cloths and it is thought that the portraits were fastened to the mummy cloth at the head of the corpse.

It is, perhaps, interesting to reflect that the painters of these Greco-Roman portraits were completely uneducated men, mere undertakers' artisans and that their method of execution—called encaustic—was clumsy and primitive in the extreme. They mixed the colours with

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

melted wax and applied them, hot and liquid, to the panel, with a flat palette-knife. It is, therefore, astonishing that this brilliant result was obtained with such a rude economy of means. Each portrait, indeed, possesses an individual quality and has the mood and temperament of the model very clearly defined.

The most striking among them are, perhaps, the Portrait of the august Lady with the sharp impasto earrings (No. 2914); the Portrait of a Young Woman (No. 1263); and the Portrait of an Elderly Man (No. 1265).

All these paintings were discovered in 1888 by Professor Flinders Petrie in a cemetery at Hawara in the Fayûm, Egypt.

Between the period of the Greco-Roman portraits and the revival of painting in Italy a thousand years elapse. This intermittent period is of great importance in the history of the arts and a short sketch of it is essential to effect an understanding of the basic elements in early Italian painting.

After the sack of Rome in A.D. 330, the capital of the Roman Empire and the centre of the Christianized world was moved from Rome to Byzantium, newly christened after the Emperor as Constantinople. From this new metropolis on the threshold of the East, a fresh artistic influence—called Byzantine—was to radiate and eventually to find its way to the Italian cities. The great church of Santa Sophia in Constantinople set the fashion for a new style of architecture in which East met West and the classical elements of Greece and Rome were grafted on to an Asiatic basis. This Byzantine style, with its domes and minarets, was not to stay exclusively in the East but was rapidly to spread west-

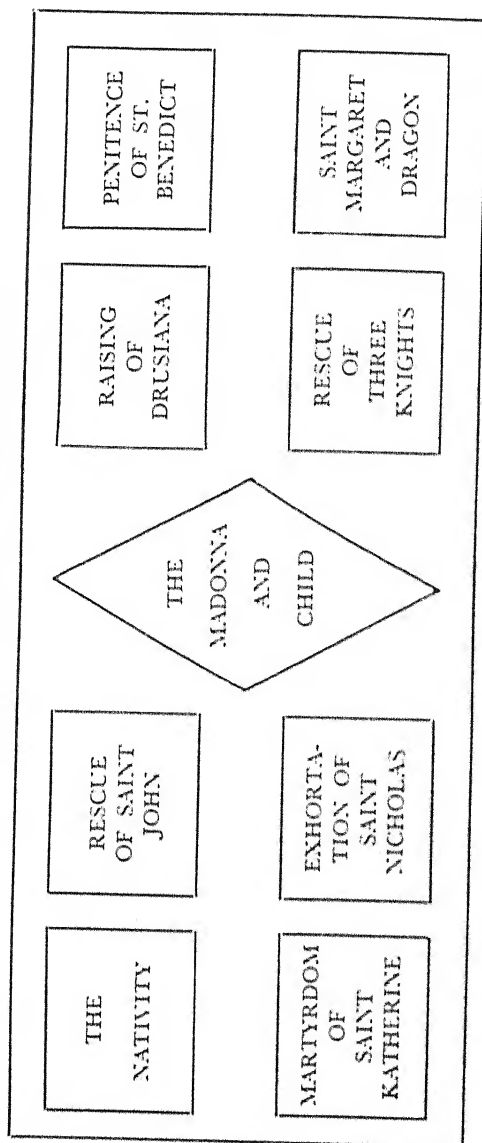
ROOMS I TO VII, DOME, VESTIBULE

ward to Italy, as the spacious basilicas of Ravenna, Rome and Venice are there to testify.

From the outset, the art of the Byzantine era was devotional in character and was associated with the adornment of religious places. Its decorative characteristics were Oriental rather than European and the cool severity of the classical ideal gave place to a form of decoration which was rich, elaborate, exotic, and mysterious. Even the medium was changed and the flat, insecure method of paint was replaced by the profusely ornamental and more permanent medium of mosaic. The use of mosaic prevailed in Italy until the last half of the twelfth century when the pendulum of fashion began again to swing back to the use of paint. In the thirteenth century there was an increasing demand in Italy for the decoration of places of worship which the method of mosaic—being extremely costly and slow to execute—could not adequately supply, and the use of tempera—colours diluted with yolk of egg and water—was therefore adopted. It was, however, impossible for the Byzantine characteristics at once to disappear and the large masses, formal gestures and conventional modelling (essential in mosaic work where the piecing together of cubes of coloured glass prevents any refinements of form and movement) are only too apparent in the first essays of Italian painting.

An excellent example of this transference of mosaic to paint is the famous altarpiece of the **Madonna and Child** (No. 564) by MARGARITONE (1216–1293). Here we find a reflection of the principal characteristics of the Byzantine mosaic. The Virgin and Child have fixed, staring eyes and the folds in their garments are indicated merely by straight lines such as were used

PLAN OF MARGARITONE ALTARPIECE





ROOM 1 *Antiquity to 1400*

2 FRENCH SCHOOL, LATE XIVTH CENTURY: The Wilton Diptych

ROOMS I TO VII, DOME, VESTIBULE

in mosaic work, where hieratic form was the only form obtainable. The Virgin, moreover, is represented not as an Earthly Mother but as Empress of Heaven and is surrounded by an oval-shaped band, called the *Mandorla*, a Byzantine convention symbolic of the Heavenly Gates, within which all is celestial and without which all is of the earth. The Byzantine mosaic workers, too, delighted in the representation of incidents from the Gospels and Apostolic books and in Margaritone's altarpiece the Virgin is surrounded by eight such incidents.

On the top row on the left we see the Nativity. The Virgin and Child are surrounded by Angels, whilst, a little way apart, the shepherds receive the Tidings. In the foreground, among some shrubbery, sheep and goats can be detected. One of the goats is standing on his hind legs and eating some leaves from a bush.

The next square on this side represents the miraculous salvation of St. John the Evangelist from the cauldron of boiling oil into which he was cast by Domitian. Angels are rescuing the saint whilst the minions of the Emperor are exciting the flames with forks, conveniently long.

Below, on the left, we see the execution of St. Katherine of Alexandria in the presence of the Emperor Maxentius. The scene is shown in continuous action and we perceive the angel catching the head as it falls from the body whilst another flies away, bearing it in a napkin. Higher up, we are given the Burial of the Saint, by angels, on Mount Sinai.

In the next square, St. Nicholas of Bari is exhorting the pilgrims to cast away the pitchers of oil given them by the Devil in the guise of a woman. Again the scene

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is set continuously and we see the Devil disguised, the exhortations of the saint and the casting away of the oil, all at the same time.

On the right-hand side of the Virgin there are again four scenes. The first represents the raising from the dead of Drusiana of Ephesus by St. John.

In the next square along, St. Benedict is portrayed rolling in a bed of thorns and nettles, a self-inflicted torment to aid the saint against the temptations of the Devil.

Below, St. Nicholas is saving three knights from execution by the consul of Myra and lastly, in the next square, we enjoy the spectacle of St. Margaret being swallowed by the Dragon and being disgorged intact. In case the scene should seem too violent for the intimate confines of a picture the artist has placed a grille between us and the monster to reassure us of our personal security.

Margaritone's picture was famous even in the fifteenth century and Vasari expresses wonder at its excellent condition.

The Byzantine tradition gradually worked itself out in Italy during the passage of time, but in Russia it persisted strongly even until recent years as the **Transfiguration** (No. 4163)¹ of the **Russian School** of the early eighteenth century will reveal.

Above the bookstall in the North Vestibule, hangs a fragment of a fresco which is always an interesting possession in an Art Gallery since it gives us an opportunity of examining closely a form of painting which can usually be seen only on large wall-spaces in churches or palaces and, then, only at a considerable distance.

¹ Picture at present in the Reference Section.

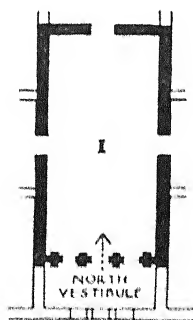
ROOMS I TO VII, DOME, VESTIBULE

This fragment, **The Fall of the Rebel Angels** (No. 1216) by **SPINELLO ARETINO** (1333 ?-1410), is a highly dramatic work and is the result of an intense artistic excitement. The host of angels, led by St. Michael, swoop down with a terrifying vehemence, but it is a tantalizing disappointment that the fragment prevents us from seeing the figure of Lucifer at whom the angels aim their wrath. If Vasari can be believed, this figure was even more powerful than that of the warrior saint.

The artist has intensified the dramatic element in the picture by the use of broken colour. His scheme is a mixture of gold, green, brown and dull red, and the flame-like effect suggests most really that Angelic forces are clashing with Diabolic. All the pigments are broken up and the surface of the picture is uneven, for St. Michael's halo and those of some of the angels are raised in thick gesso. This method of obtaining dramatic effect finds an echo in the more recent efforts of the 'Pointillistes' who aim at inducing an atmosphere of excitement by means of spots or strokes of colour.

The picture of the Rebel Angels was once much larger and was intended to decorate the wall of a church. In its original position it must have seemed like some expansive mosaic, and even in the more confined space of the National Gallery we have difficulty in believing that it consists of paint imposed upon rough and now half-perished plaster.

ROOM I



THIS room is devoted to large pictures of the Florentine and Umbrian Schools. On the east wall, to our right as we enter, we see the **Battle Scene** (No. 583) by **PAOLO UCCELLO** (1397-1475), one of the few pictures of this period which do not portray a religious subject. The artist is depicting the defeat of the Siennese by the Florentines at the Rout of San Romano in 1482. In the centre on a white charger is the Condottiere Niccoló da Tolentino and behind him ride his armour-bearer, young and bareheaded, and two knights who carry standards displaying his heraldic device, the Knot of Solomon.

The picture is one of a series of three, all of which were intended to form a grand decoration in the bed-chamber of Cosimo de' Medici in the Riccardi Palace at Florence. The two panels which complete the set are to be seen in the Louvre and Uffizi Galleries.

The '*clou*' to this picture is its scientific aim; it is, indeed, an excellent example of Florentine science as applied to art. The painter had long meditated upon the problems of perspective and the study of artistic mathematics was the pivot of his existence. Vasari tells

ROOM I

us that the scientific ponderings of Uccello gave his wife much concern and that she would often try to distract her husband's mind from these intricate and all-absorbing reflections.

The 'Rout of San Romano' is not intended as a piece of alarming realism but as an exercise in scientific decoration. It should, therefore, not be judged in the terms of reality but should be considered as little more actual in representation than a handsomely embroidered brocade. Refusal to treat Uccello's work in the light of science as applied to decoration has led to constant misunderstandings. Even Vasari was guilty of this confusion and regarded the artist as a suspicious mountebank who would think no ill in painting cities red and cows blue. Uccello has made it clear that his principal object in painting the picture was to make of it an essay in geometrical perspective. Everything is made more than ordinarily difficult for him. He delights in playing with an elaborate pattern of broken lances and dead men—all adroitly foreshortened—and the hill that leaps away into the background is only a last compliment to his skill in scientific draughtsmanship. The actuality of the scene is not the artist's concern and his excellently observed details are only vehicles for his æsthetic dexterity or the trappings of his decoration. He has indeed no thought for realism and the fact that his horses come from a rocking-horse world only adds to his delight.

There is a marvellous technical finish to the picture. Paolo Uccello has not been content to use the common medium of gold for the harness and the armour but he has made the daring experiment of painting it in silver foil.

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The minutiae, too, are well observed. In the background we see two horses speeding up the hill—perhaps to summon help—and beneath a tree on the right two men are in furious engagement whilst others hurry to their assistance as fast as their heavy armour will allow them. The field in the background is separated from the foreground by a hedge of dark green foliage. On the left can be seen orange trees in fruit and on the right are wild roses, pink and white. The beauties of nature gave much pleasure to the artist, a fact reflected in his nickname of *Il Uccello* ('the little bird') given him because of the delight he took, when serving as a goldsmith under Lorenzo Ghiberti, in modelling little birds and animals.

The 'Battle Scene' represents only one side of Uccello's genius, for, in his day, he was famed as a portrait painter. For many years it was thought that Uccello painted the well-known **Portrait of a Lady** (No. 758) whose decided character and peculiar beauty are most appropriately depicted in profile.

This attribution to Uccello has now been waived and the honours are given [partly because of the artist's expressed partiality towards spinous ornamentation such as the design on the lady's sleeve] to **ALESSO BALDOVINETTI** (1425?–1499).

Uccello's 'Battle Scene' is flanked on either side by the two panels **Rhetoric** (No. 755) and **Music** (No. 756), for many years attributed to **MELOZZO DA FORLÌ** (1438–1494) but now generally ascribed to Justus of Ghent, a Flemish artist working under the influence of Melozzo.

Both these panels are part of a series representing the Seven Liberal Arts and were painted for the library of

ROOM I

the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, whose love of books was such that he had every volume bound in crimson and silver. The frieze which runs above the marble throne in each of the panels represents part of an inscription, describing the Duke's titles, which adorned the ceiling of his library.

A little further along, on the same wall, we come to two of the rarest treasures in the National Gallery, the **Nativity** and the **Baptism** by **PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA** (1416?-1492).

PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA, like Uccello, was an ardent mathematician, but he had a more deeply reflective and less bewildered genius than that of his eccentric contemporary.

Piero was recognized as being one of the finest mathematicians of his time. As a boy, he displayed an extraordinary precocity in the Sciences and we are told that in early youth he sketched a cup especially to show the opening in perspective. He published, in later years, a learned treatise on the Science of Perspective which became a *Vade Mecum* for many artists of the day.

His work as a painter is rare and always of a crystalline integrity. It is indeed fortunate that this gallery should possess three examples of his art, two of which are among his masterpieces. Most of his painting is confined to Borgo San Sepulcro (his birthplace) and to Arezzo where he lived and worked and genuine representations of his work are seldom found even in the great Art Galleries of Europe.

It is to the personal advocacy of Disraeli that the National Gallery owes its possession of **The Nativity** (No. 908). This exceedingly chaste and gracious picture reveals the consummate skill of the artist as a

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

designer for the composition is most learnedly built upon sweeping curves which are kept in place by a counterplay of verticals and horizontals. The scene is beautifully conceived. The gentle Virgin worships the Child to the accompaniment of angelic voices whilst the tired Joseph sits resting on the saddle which he has taken from the ass. In the stable the ox and ass are swelling the angels' psalm with the only music they can make.

The details are observed with a tireless exactness; in the foreground, on the left, are three goldfinches and on the roof of the stable sits a magpie. In the left background we are allowed a glimpse of exquisite Umbrian landscape and the reflection of the trees in the river is accurately portrayed. On the right we see the spires of the artist's native city, Borgo San Sepulcro. A marmoreal calm pervades the picture and it seems that the angels, as they welcome Christmas morning, have been frozen into immutable stone.

The Baptism (665) is perhaps the most scientifically composed picture in the gallery and is as swiftly chiselled as the 'Nativity'. The design is planned with a mathematical precision. If we start at the beginning of the river, we must allow our eye to follow its course and to run along the back of the man who is stripping his shirt and follow the line of the Baptist's outstretched arm and skirt the top edge of the tree. This forms the great S curve on which the picture is planned. The curve is kept steady by a secondary pattern of verticals and horizontals provided by the standing figures and the dove and the clouds. The group of angels on the left is perfectly balanced by the little knot of men standing on the opposite bank. This group would be too



ROOM I

PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA: The Nativity

[No. 908]

ROOM I

small to be a complement to the angels were it not that their reflections in the water extend the form downwards.

The colour is as carefully harmonized as the form and the exquisite pastel shades of the angels' robes are in perfect poise with those of the group on the opposite bank.

Piero della Francesca, being a scientist, was also a close observer of nature and his interest in the things around him is at once noticeable in this picture. The landscape and foliage are most sensitively depicted, but it is a pity that the greens, once fresh and spring-like, have deepened so considerably with the passage of time. Everything has been accurately perceived and the reflection in the water is not that of the hill-top which we see on the horizon, but, more correctly, the reflection of some rising ground in the middle distance.

As in the Nativity, there is a wealth of entrancing detail. The water-plants in the foreground, the pebbles beneath the stream and even the water in the scallop-shell held by the Baptist are painted with extreme care. In the background we see a road leading to a castle, through a pleasant expanse of fields and trees.

The figures also have their interest, and the man taking off his shirt not only serves as part of the basic design but also adds a delicious piece of humorous realism.

To have passed from Paolo Uccello to Piero della Francesca is to have come from one extreme to the other. In Paolo we are delighted by his whimsical geometry, but in Piero our wonder is mixed with awe

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at his dignified aloofness and at his sense of moral detachment.

There is one other representation of the work of Piero della Francesca in the Gallery, the impressive figure of **Saint Michael and the Dragon** (No. 769), which is yet another proof of Piero's impersonal but dominating art.

Between the two masterpieces of Piero della Francesca hangs the well-known **Madonna and Child with SS. Jerome and Dominic** (No. 293) by **FILIPPINO LIPPI (1457-1504)**, the son of the more celebrated Fra Filippo. On the Virgin's right kneels the Hermit Saint clasping the penitential stone and on her left we see St. Dominic with the lily and the book and the inkhorn at his side.

The figures of the Virgin and her attendant Saints are set in a beautiful landscape in which the artist's love of nature is clearly felt; flowers and plantains grow up on every side and each one is painted with an exquisite precision. In the rock on the left, we have another view of St. Jerome, this time at prayer, whilst, below, his lion is warding off a bear from intruding upon his master's meditations. Animal life appears greatly to have attracted the artist for higher up in the rock sits a squirrel and in the tree behind St. Jerome a bird is feeding three nestlings. In the sky, too, a wild duck is being attacked from above by an eagle.

On the extreme right is a house on a hill and some men are walking in the fields. On the hill in the centre is a steep winding road along which a saint is driving a donkey. This figure gives much cause for wonder, as not only is it difficult to perceive its significance but it is also curious that the artist, having drawn his animals

ROOM I

and birds with such faultless care, should have fallen into the grotesque mistake of setting the figures descending the hill at a direct right angle to the road.

Beneath the large picture is a predella or series of small scenes from the lives of Christ and the Saints. On either side are St. Francis and the Magdalene, whilst in the centre we see the Dead Christ supported by Joseph of Arimathaea. This central panel, though in size a miniature, is as thoughtfully conceived as the main portion of the picture, and the Crown of Thorns and a basket containing the hammer, nails and pincers—the Instruments of the Passion—lie on the edge of the Tomb. At the extreme ends of the predella are the coats-of-arms of the Rucellai family—by whom the picture was commissioned.

On the North Wall of this room hang two very famous and majestic pictures: the **Circumcision** (No. 1128) by **LUCA SIGNORELLI** (1441–1523) and the **Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian** (No. 292) by the brothers **POLLAIUOLO** (c. 1432–1498).

Signorelli's picture is a noble work showing that the artist possessed a mental grandeur not far removed from that of Raphael and Michelangelo. The 'Saint Sebastian' of the brothers Pollaiuolo has little outward charm, but, by its marvellous understanding of perspective and anatomy, it may be considered as the quintessence of Florentine Science as applied to art.

One of the most popular pictures in the National Gallery is the Triptych of the **Madonna Adoring** (No. 288) by **PIETRO PERUGINO** (1446–1523). This picture was part of a great altarpiece painted for the Carthusian Monastery of the Pavia, near Milan. On the left panel we see St. Michael; in the centre is the

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Virgin adoring the Child and on the right are Tobias and the Angel.

Many reproaches have been levelled against Perugino and with considerable justification. His types are often monotonous, his conceptions trivial and his power of creation is weak. Nevertheless, before a masterpiece such as the National Gallery triptych, prejudice is waived and reproof is scattered to the winds of justifiable admiration.

Perugino's altarpiece is beautifully designed; the forms are balanced so that everything points to the central panel and the Child remains the pivot of the composition. The figure of St. Michael is admirably conceived; he stands firmly upon his feet and suggests a strength fitting for the Warrior Saint. The armour which he wears is most accurately painted; everything is minutely observed, even down to the straps which fasten his cuirass. In his right hand he holds the staff which is the emblem of his Celestial leadership and with his left he grasps the shield which is decorated (rather curiously for one belonging to a Christian saint) with that most pagan of designs, the Medusa's head. Beside him are the scales in which the souls of men receive measure.

In the centre panel, three angels hover over the Virgin and Child.

Perugino, a great master of space composition, has set his figures in a delicious landscape in which the river seems really to be threading its way through the valley and the distance properly suggests the infinity of space. The small spindle-like trees assist this sense of distance for they give the eye some resting-place from which to judge the remoteness of the horizon.

ROOM I

On the right-hand panel we see Tobias and the Angel passing through a flowery meadow. Tobias holds the fish—the painting of which is a miracle of technical precision—and the angel has the box containing the fish's entrails which were to effect a marvellous cure upon the eyes of Tobias's father Tobit.

The artist lived and worked at Perugia in Umbria and it was for this reason that he was given the name of Il Perugino. He was the master of Raphael who was at one time so much under his influence that his work was almost indistinguishable from that of the elder painter. Perugino was extremely popular among his contemporaries and was well supplied with commissions until the time of his death. It was, indeed, when he was working at the **Adoration of the Shepherds** (No. 1441) (the large fresco in tempera which is now hanging above the main staircase of the gallery) that he met his death of the plague.

With the **Madonna and Child** (No. 3046) by **MASACCIO** (1401–1428) which hangs beside the entrance to Room II, we are taken back again about one hundred years. This picture may be considered as the key to the aims and ideals of the Florentine school and in it we see the æsthetic principles, first conceived by Giotto, definitely laid down as profound truths.

Fully to understand the significance of Masaccio's work, we should cast our minds back to the Margaritone altarpiece (No. 564) and draw from it an illuminating comparison. Inasmuch as Margaritone's picture was a reflection of the Byzantine tradition so is the Masaccio Madonna a crystallization of the tradition of classical painting—a tradition, indeed, in which the problems of form and volume were definitely realized.

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

Masaccio was not, however, the first to tackle these problems. Giotto had been the earliest to discover that mere symbolic representation would satisfy only the first glances at a picture and that no real dramatic significance could be obtained without a basic understanding of the laws of mass and volume. Giotto, indeed, was the first to paint figures in which the form was felt beneath the drapery and whose gestures and actions were manifestations of real movement and not the outcome of mere symbolic conventions. Unfortunately Giotto is not represented in our Gallery, but we have this great Madonna of Masaccio and Masaccio was Giotto reborn.

Masaccio's aim was to introduce the third dimension into paint. He knew that height and breadth were only two-thirds of the making of a picture and that to gain the whole effect things must be represented in the round. In this picture of the 'Virgin and Child' we are at once impressed by the feeling of depth. The draperies are not indicated by a mere gold line but the forms are modelled so that one can feel the mass beneath the folds. The flesh, too, is scientifically portrayed; the Figure of the Child reflects a deep anatomical knowledge and even the creases at the wrists are not omitted. These creases, moreover, are not mere lines but real furrows.

The picture has the solidity of sculpture, a fact which is ever present in the work of the Florentines for whom sculpture was the dominating art and the source of all æsthetic inspiration. Masaccio was, himself, a student of sculpture and his work reflects the study of Ghiberti and Donatello.

The design of this picture of the 'Madonna and Child'



ROOM I

MASACCIO : Madonna and Child

[No. 2216]

ROOM I

is noble and intellectual. In order to heighten the majestic effect the artist has circumscribed the figure in the form of a great oval. The Virgin is seated upon a colossal throne surrounded by angels and the Child is rapt in meditation as He sucks the bitter grape, the foretaste of His future Passion. Form and volume, however, are not Masaccio's sole preoccupations and his colour scheme is as marvellous as it is audacious.

Next to nothing is known about the painter's history and biographical details are as rare with him as are his paintings. His name of 'Il Masaccio' means 'careless Tom', and all we know of his life was that he was something of a mountebank, that he was negligent of himself and thoughtful of others, and that he died at the early age of twenty-seven.

Our picture of the 'Madonna and Child' was bought for the Nation from Canon Sutton in the darkest days of the War.

In the centre of this room (temporary position only), among so many large and monumental works, stands the tiny diptych from Wilton House. The **Wilton Diptych** (No. 4451) has been the cause of much learned controversy. English mediævalists try to assign it as the work of an English painter and some among them have hoped to trace a connection between the picture and the coronation at Westminster of King Richard II in 1377. There are others, even, who attempt to trace its origin to an Italian source. It is, however, generally considered that the painter of the diptych was French, that the picture was completed towards the end of the fourteenth century, and that the artist was in some way connected with André Beauneveu who was active as a painter from 1360-1403.

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

On the front, we see a representation of King Richard II being introduced by S. Edmund and Edward the Confessor and St. John the Baptist to the Virgin and Child. It will be noticed that the King and all the angels carry the badge of the White Hart which was the King's own heraldic device inherited from his mother, the Fair Maid of Kent. Round the king's neck and also worn by the angels is a necklet made of the pods of the plantagenesta, a species of broom, the emblem of the Plantagenet dynasty. On the king's robe is a continuous pattern of the white hart encircled by the seeds of this royal plant and interspersed with a counter design of displayed eagles.

The painting makes manifest an incomparable grace and delicacy. The gold background, exquisitely pricked in diaper, the curls of St. John's Lamb, the wreaths of the angels and the flowers which spring from beneath their feet are all proof that the **Master of the Wilton Diptych** is fit to rank among the world's most elegant artists.

On the back of the diptych we have the armorial device of Richard II (his own arms impaled with those of the Kingdom) and also a charming representation of the White Hart. Unfortunately the back is not in as good condition as the front and many details in the royal arms are obliterated. The hart's antlers have almost disappeared and only a faint impression remains of where they once have been.

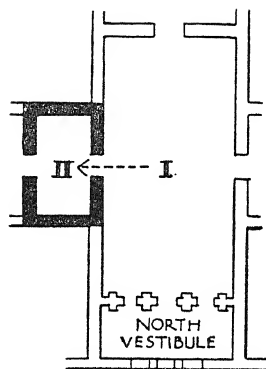
The diptych was once in the possession of Charles I, the most art-loving of English monarchs, and later found its way into the possession of the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton.

ROOM I
OTHER NOTABLE PICTURES IN
THIS ROOM

GENTILE DA FABRIANO. Madonna and Child.
(Lent by H.M. the King).

BOTTICINI. Assumption of the Virgin
(No. 1126).

ROOM II



THIS little room is devoted to small pictures of the early Florentine School. On the right of the door as we enter from Room I we see the tiny **God the Father** (No. 3627) by **MASACCIO**. Even in so small a work, the power of Masaccio's artistic conception is felt and it is interesting to compare this picture with the huge Madonna we have just seen and to trace the qualities common to both.

This minute circular picture, only 5 inches in diameter, was probably an embellishment on the frame of a large altarpiece of which our majestic Madonna was also, perhaps, a part.

The Crucifixion (No. 1138) by **ANDREA DAL CASTAGNO** (1410?-1457), despite its small proportions, is a picture full of dramatic significance. The atmosphere is pregnant with terrible happenings; the Crosses dominate the world and the skies are troubled at the Great Crisis. Andrea dal Castagno was a painter inclined towards violent realism and here we have the epitome of his art. The suffering of the Crucifixion

ROOM II

could not be more impressively portrayed and the figures do not assume conventional attitudes of sorrow but are bowed in profound grief.

The picture is one of the earliest to reflect an interest in landscape, and the barren hill and gloomy solitude of the scene intensify the atmosphere of tragedy.

The gaunt realism of Castagno's Crucifixion makes a strange contrast with the flippant little picture of **Apollo and Daphne** (No. 928) by **POLLAIUOLO** (1432-1498). Here we have the oft-repeated story of Apollo's pursuit through Grecian meadows of the maiden Daphne until she was turned into a laurel tree. But the scene of Pollaiuolo's picture is no longer ancient Attica but the banks of the River Arno.

The masterpiece of Room II is the **Christ Surrounded by Saints and Angels** (No. 663) by **FRA ANGELICO** (1387-1455). The name of Fra Angelico has gone down to history as that of an artist who, above all things, loved beauty and the saintly life. As his name indicates, he was a Friar and he belonged to the Dominican Order. His life's work was the decoration of the Monastery of St. Marco in Florence where he ornamented with a painting one wall in each cell. His art is a complete reflection of his mind and there is no work from his hand which does not reflect a religious fervour which, were it not so simple, would amount almost to the fanatical. Next to his devotions, the beauty of nature and of fair colours was what he loved the best and in many of his pictures we have a view of some delicious garden or pleasant outdoor scene. Fra Angelico was, indeed, the first Italian artist to use an identifiable landscape as the background of a picture, and in his 'Marriage of the Virgin' at Cortona we catch

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a distant glimpse of Lake Trasimene which lies not far north of Rome.

The mind of Fra Angelico was set upon celestial things and in our picture of the Risen Christ he gives us a little strip of Heaven. The beauty of the colouring and the brilliant rendering of the dresses need no analysis, but it may be interesting to note the identity of some of the saints, all of whom are represented with their emblems.

A	B	C	D	E
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The picture is divided into five panels: in the centre (C) we see Christ in white robes holding the standard of the Resurrection. He is surrounded by angels in marvellous array and on the head of each is a little tongue of fire.

The angels swell a pæan of praise on a varied orchestra, including the lute, harp, zither, viol, flute, clarion, horns, cymbals, and a small organ. Other angels are carrying the hammer, nails, and crown of thorns, the instruments of the Passion.

On the panels, immediately adjoining the central panel, we can identify many saints. Amongst others are:
On the left panel (B):

St. Francis with the Stigmata and habit of poverty.

St. Nicholas of Bari with three golden balls or purses. [He is the patron Saint of pawn-brokers, sailors, and of schoolboys.]

St. Dominic with the lily.

St. Thomas Aquinas—the doctor of the Paris University. A star is on his breast.

ROOM II

St. Joseph with the budding staff.
St. Jerome as a cardinal.
St. Peter with the keys.
St. Paul with the sword.
St. Onofrius with the vineleaf girdle.
St. Paul the hermit, clad in a robe of plaited green.

On the right panel (D):

Noah with the Ark.
Moses with the tables of stone.
St. John the Baptist with the hairy coat.
David with the harp.
SS. Cosmo and Damian, patrons of doctors with
boxes of medicinal ointment.
St. John with the book.
St. Lawrence with the gridiron of his martyrdom.
St. Agnes with the bleeding lamb.
St. Catharine with the wheel.
St. Scholastica with the candle.

On the outer panels (A and E) are arrayed the Saints and Blessed of the Dominican Order.¹

On the left (A), we see, among many others:

A saint with the dove breathing flames into his ear, perhaps St. Ambrose?
St. Buoninsegna with the two-handed saw cleaving his head.
St. Ærichus with the dove on the book.

On the right (B):

St. Peter (O.B.) with the Holy Name imprinted on his lips.

¹ The picture was painted for the Dominican church at Fiesole, near Florence.

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St. Walter with the stigmata.

St. Moratius with the three leaves in his right hand and the Crucifix in his left.

Fra Angelico had one well-known pupil in **BEN-
OZZO GOZZOLI (1420-1498)** whose **Rape of Helen** (No. 591) hangs in this room. This small octagonal picture needs little explanation as its beauties, though brilliant, are not profound.

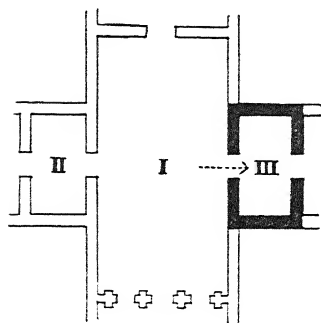
The picture possesses a freshness of colour and liveliness of movement which delight the eye.

In the foreground we see Paris carrying the unprotesting lady in his arms whilst a little child runs beside him. On the right is a pink stone temple in which a group of people are talking unconcernedly and in the background a ship is waiting for the eloping pair.

Although Benozzo Gozzoli has inherited something of his master's sleight-of-hand, the significance of his painting does not often lie very deep. In this picture he has given us what seems a pleasant charade and we cannot imagine that we are looking at the Rape of the wife of Menelaus, an incident whose tremendous sequel was the Trojan War.

Benozzo Gozzoli has, however, left one great work behind him and that is the painted Chapel of the Riccardi Palace in Florence. This masterpiece absolves the artist from the charge of having left the world nothing more than a series of amusing vignettes.

ROOM III



By retracing our steps across Room I and by entering the small room on the opposite side, we transfer ourselves from Florence to Siena.

Siena was the centre of a great artistic efflorescence, as great, indeed, in its beginnings as that of Florence. But there glowed, in this more remote Italian city, no undying spark of scientific progression and the brilliance promised at the outset was not long of life.

Inasmuch as Florence was the centre of all new thought and of continued audacious experiment, so was Siena a provincial city lacking in progressive vitality.

The later painters of Siena seemed never to come in contact with the problems of Volume, Light and Perspective which were revolving in the minds of the men of Florence, and thus it was that, after the first flush of great masters, painting in Siena remained where it had started, gracious and refined but archaic and out of date.

The earliest master of the Sienese School, and also its greatest representative, was **DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA (1260-1339)**. Fully to appreciate the work of this great painter, we must cast our minds back to the

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

era before Masaccio and to the period of Margaritone, when Italian painting was dominated by the memory of the Byzantine tradition.

Duccio's most famous work is the huge 'Maestà Altarpiece' at Siena, on the completion of which the city was granted a holiday and a procession was formed to bear the picture from the studio to the Cathedral. The **Predella** or set of scenes from the New Testament which formed the base of the work was separated in later years from the main altarpiece and the National Gallery is fortunate in possessing three of its sections.

The Annunciation (No. 1139) is a sensitive interpretation of an ever-impressive incident, and **The Transfiguration** (No. 1330) is a highly mysterious and dramatic work, but, most significant of the three as reflecting Duccio's artistic status, is the **Christ Healing the Blind Man** (No. 1140).

Like some of the smaller incidents on the Altarpiece by Margaritone, the scene of Duccio's picture of the Blind Man is set in simultaneous action. In the centre foreground, we see the man being healed by the Saviour and a few feet to the right we see him again, having washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam and rejoicing in the return of his sight.

This convention of continuous action, handed down from the Byzantine era, can be seen in many forms of art throughout the Middle Ages. In the mediæval theatre the stage was divided into partitions each representing a different place and various scenes in the life of the same person were acted at the same time.

Duccio's picture reveals other reflections of the Byzantine tradition. The gestures repeat themselves continually and the folds in the dresses are conventionally

ROOM III

represented, although they seem a little more sophisticated in modelling than those in the Transfiguration (No. 1330) which are indicated merely by gold lines. The perspective, too, is incorrect and, in the little group of the Apostles, the heads of those in the back row are on the same level as those in the front. The background, on the other hand, though only a street in convention, shows the beginnings of a sense of distance.

The 'Christ healing the Blind Man' is one of Duccio's masterpieces. The colouring is superb and nothing could excel the beauty of the Apostle's robes nor of Christ's cloak. The blue of the cloak is of deep ultramarine, a colour made from the pure lapis lazuli and very costly. Such a pigment is rarely used to-day since the expense of even a small tube is great.

The details in the picture are sensitively observed. The blind man carries a long forked stick with which he taps his way and a small can for food or water hangs by his side.

The trough on the extreme right is the Pool of Siloam which is being refreshed with water flowing through a carved lion's mouth.

Another beautiful example of the early Sienese School is the **Heads of Four Nuns** (No. 1147) by **AMBROGIO LORENZETTI** (working 1323-1348). This is a fragment of a fresco, and by it we are given a good idea of the troublesome methods of mural painting. The pigment must be rapidly applied while the plaster is still wet, a process which compels every stroke to be final and makes alteration almost impossible. It is, therefore, wonderful that with these embarrassing means the artist could realize such a sensitive and delicate conception as this of the Four Nuns. The intricate

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pattern made by the heads seems the outcome of long reflection and the nervous refinement of the faces suggests gradual work rather than a hasty method entailing a series of quick decisions.

The **Heads of Two Apostles** (No. 276) have caused confusion among the critics. They have been attributed both to Masaccio and to Giotto but are now ingeniously given to **SPINELLO ARETINO** (1333?-1410). The picture is impressive in its insistence upon linear design, and vitality is given to the Apostles' heads by the sharp wavy lines in their locks of hair. This was a method used by later Italian artists such as Botticelli and Michelangelo and is still in evidence among the moderns.

OTHER NOTABLE PICTURES IN THE ROOM

DUCCIO. Madonna and Child with Saints

(No. 566).

NICCOLÒ DA FOLIGNO. The Crucifixion (No. 1107).

SASSETTA. Heads of Angels (No. 1842).



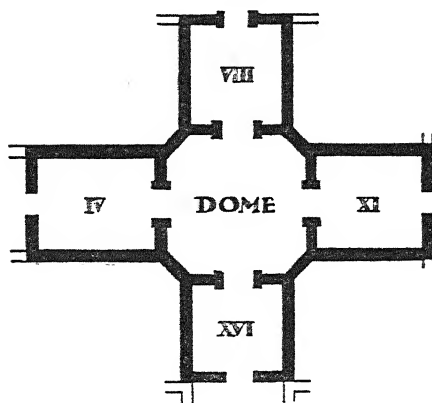
ROOM III

DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA: Christ Healing the Blind

[No. 1140]

THE DOME AND ITS DEPENDENT ROOMS

IV, VIII, XI, XVI



THIS central section of the East Wing, formed by the Dome and its dependent rooms, is devoted to the larger altarpieces of the Italian School. The architecture of these rooms is ecclesiastical in character and was designed especially to suggest the settings for which this type of picture was intended.

ROOM IV

contains the rarest treasure of the section dominated by the Dome in the great altarpiece of the **Coronation of the Virgin** (No. 569) by the Florentine **ANDREA ORCAGNA** (1308?-1368). Most of the men of Florence were versatile in talent and for a painter to combine pictorial art with that of sculpture was by no means rare. Orcagna, however, was the complete craftsman, for not only was he skilled in sculpture and painting but was noted also as an architect and goldsmith.

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

In the centre of our resplendent altarpiece we see Christ adoring His Mother as Queen of Heaven whilst an orchestra of angels sound their praises. As in the predella by Fra Angelico, in Room II, the angels make all kinds of music and play upon the organ, harp, viol, psaltery, zither and bagpipe.

On either side of the middle panel we have a group of Saints, each of whom is represented with his especial emblem.

On the left, we can see amongst others:

St. Peter with his keys and a model of the Church of St. Pietro in Florence for which the picture was painted.

St. Bartholomew with the knife with which he was skinned alive.

St. Stephen with the stone upon his head.

St. Francis in the habit of poverty.

St. Mary Magdalene with the box of ointment.

St. Lucy with her lamp.

On the right, amongst others are:

St. Paul with the book and sword.

St. Matthew with the book and pence.

St. Lawrence with the gridiron.

St. Nicholas with the three gold pieces.

St. Agnes with the lamb.

St. Catherine with the wheel.

Despite the bewildering radiance of the dresses the picture has a complete compositional unity and all the lines lead directly to the central figures of Christ and His Mother.

Another striking picture in this room is the **Procession to Calvary** (No. 1143) by **RIDOLFO DEL**

ROOMS XVI AND XI

GHIRLANDAIO (1483-1561), the son of the more celebrated **Domenico**. This picture is impressive in its unusually brilliant colour effect. The procession, goaded on by a mounted centurion, passes along the front of the picture and beside the Cross kneels **St. Veronica** who displays the handkerchief imprinted with the face of the Saviour.

Christ is being dragged onward by a guard who wears a yellow and crimson tunic slashed with black which gives a slightly melodramatic finish to a rather theatrical picture.

ROOM XVI

has, as its masterpiece, the **Adoration of the Kings** (No. 729) by **VINCENZO FOPPA (1427/30-1515/16)**, the first well-known artist of the School of Lombardy. The picture aims at having a rich decorative effect; the kings and their suite are magnificently apparelled and the gilt on their robes is elaborately embossed. But, for all its imposing draughtsmanship, the picture is ponderous rather than impressive and is the result of learning rather than of inspiration. Perhaps the fact that it was painted in the artist's extreme old age may partly account for its lifelessness.

ROOM XI

contains the well-known **Nativity** (No. 1133) by **LUCA SIGNORELLI (1441-1523)** and two characteristic allegorical pieces by **PAOLO VERONESE (1528-1588)**, which lend the room an air of opulent possession.

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THE DOME

itself contains, among other masterpieces, the **Madonna with Saint Anne** (No. 179) by **FRANCESCO FRANCIA** (1450?-1517), of which the lunette¹ representing **The Pietà** (No. 180) is more famous than the main picture. This lunette is an example of perfectly poised design, but it is too formal fully to satisfy those who demand, in a Pietà, the gaunt realism of paralysing tragedy.

The Francia Altarpiece is happily balanced on the opposite wall in the Dome Room by the **Madonna of the Girdle** (No. 1155) by **MATTEO DI GIOVANNI** (1430/35-1495), an artist of the late Sienese School. The picture is a mass of brilliant colour but the tone is too metallic to be pleasing. The intricate design has at first a superficial interest, but a second glance will prove it to be disorderly rather than intellectual.

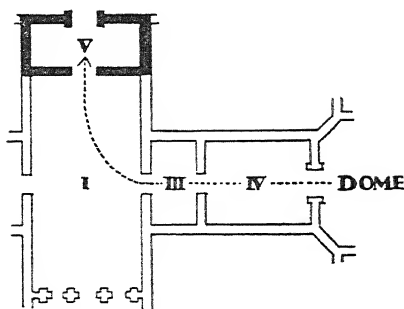
The Virgin is represented as the Queen of Heaven and has cast her girdle to St. Thomas who springs forward to catch it. The Angelic Choir celebrate the scene with varied music.

ROOM VIII

so long preserved as a chapel-like setting for the Blenheim Raphael has recently been opened out and it now provides us with an imposing vista into the large Venetian gallery. The room is adorned with large Italian altarpieces such as the **Adoration of the Kings** (No. 268) by **PAOLO VERONESE** (1528-1588), a magnificent decoration by the most princely of Venetian painters.

¹ The secondary portion of the altarpiece, shaped like a half-moon. It can go either above or below the principal picture.

ROOM V



TO reach Room V we have to retrace our steps, through the Sieneſe School, as far as the north end of Room I. Here we ſhall find a corridor-like room devoted to the School of Lombardy and more eſpecially to Leonardo da Vinci. With the work of this great maſter hanging at one end of the room it is difficult to find intereſt for any other pictures, but it would be a pity to miſs the intelligent **Family Portraits** (Nos. 779/780) of the **Milanese School** or the **Adoration of the Kings** (No. 3073) by **BRAMANTINO** (c. 1475–1536), in which the artiſt’s paſſion for geometry has led him to decorate the foreground of his picture with a number of rectangular boxes. The room alſo contains the well-known **Venetian Senator** (No. 923) by **ANDREA DA SOLARIO** (1465?–after 1515) and the heavily-modelled **Madonna and Child** (No. 728) by **GIOVANNI BOLTRAFFIO** (1467–1516).

Everything in this room ſeems of ſecondary importance beſide the **Virgin of the Rocks** (No. 1093) by **LEONARDO DA VINCI** (1452–1519). This great picture, coming from the hand of one of the rareſt maſters

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whom the world has ever seen, is among the most priceless treasures in the National Collection.

The paintings of Leonardo da Vinci are extremely scarce and there are only about twelve pictures which can be considered authentic and several bundles of drawings. The reason for this rarity is twofold. Leonardo lived at a time in which the political position in Italy was uncertain owing to continued wars with France, and Lombardy was subject to frequent invasions by the French army; the artist, therefore, in those disturbed years, was unable to enjoy such long periods of unbroken concentration as would have been possible in times of peace. Leonardo, moreover, was a man of science and his mind was unusually inquisitive. He made continual experiments with his paints and often left his pictures either unfinished or in such a delicate condition that they perished in the course of time.

As a man Leonardo was as remarkable as he was an artist. He was a brilliant geologist, chemist, musician and engineer, and in his drawings of flying machines he anticipated much that is essential to modern aviation. Apart from his meditations upon the possibilities of air travel he invented musical instruments, evolved a system of writing through the looking-glass and even embarked upon the more urgent task of reconstructing the system of irrigation in the plains of Lombardy. His reflections upon the laws of physical science were audacious and profound and anticipated those of Bacon and Galileo.

Leonardo's combined genius in science and in the arts was of dual importance to his patron, Cesare Borgia, in Milan, for not only was Leonardo the engineer



ROOM V

LEONARDO DA VINCI: The Virgin of the Rocks
[No. 1093]

ROOM V

to the Court but also the principal organizer of the ducal *tes fêand* pageants.

At one time it was fashionable to discredit the authenticity of the 'Virgin of the Rocks' in favour of the replica (also by Leonardo) in the Louvre. Now, however, in these days of more scientific criticism, such alarms have been dispersed and the picture is recognized as truly genuine. Not only can its history be traced through records of a law-suit raised by the monks of the church for which the picture was commissioned, but also recent X-ray examinations have revealed traces of *pentimenti* which make the theory of copyist's work impossible.

'The Virgin of the Rocks' is the epitome of Leonardo's genius as artist and philosopher. The marvellous psychological insight, the deep devotional atmosphere and the technical precision of the detail (note especially the upturned sole of the Child's foot) all show that the painter was the master himself and make the theory of a pupil inconceivable.

Many suggestions have been raised as to the meaning of the setting. Some have said that it is the result of an impression, received in childhood, of a walk in the grottoes of Gonfalino, whilst others consider that the rocks among which the figures are seated are symbolic of the Infinity of Time and of the Eternal Significance of the Virgin Birth. A more modern and an extremely penetrating suggestion is that Leonardo's science is responsible for this mysterious landscape and that it is his way of expressing his knowledge of the primeval state of the world when the mountains of Lombardy were washed by the waters of the Adriatic. This theory, approaching that of Evolution, would have

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

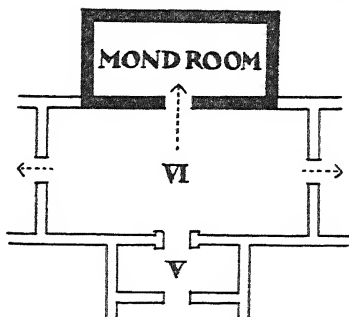
been heresy at the time in which Leonardo lived when the cloud of the Reformation was about to burst and the open expression of such an audacious scientific revelation would have entailed imprisonment or the stake.

Leonardo was, therefore, the soul of discretion and reserved these mysteries for his secret notebooks and for the cryptic backgrounds of pictures.

Parts of the National Gallery's picture are shrouded in impenetrable darkness and even on the lightest days the painting is difficult to see. This is not, however, the conscious fault of the artist nor is it entirely due to the hanging, but is the work of time. Leonardo, who could never resist experiment, worked in oil paints when their use was still uncommon and most of his pictures have sunk to a depth of tone of which the painter never dreamed.

The 'Virgin of the Rocks' is not the only example in London of Leonardo's art. In the **Diploma Gallery of Burlington House** (open all the year round irrespective of temporary exhibitions) hangs a magnificent drawing of the **Madonna with Saint Anne**, a cartoon for the picture in the Louvre. This gracious work is not as well known as it deserves, but it is hoped that its inclusion in the recent exhibition of Italian art at Burlington House will have drawn the public's attention to its existence. This drawing, indeed, reveals no less clearly than the painting at Trafalgar Square the love of beauty and searching intellect which place Leonardo among the world's peerless artists and both pictures bear witness to Vasari's judgment that truly marvellous and celestial was this Leonardo, the bastard son of a wealthy Florentine and of a peasant girl from the mountain village of Vinci.

THE MOND ROOM



ON leaving the School of Lombardy, it is best to go directly into the **Mond Room** which is a cul-de-sac and therefore a convenient point from which to start on a tour of this part of the gallery.

All the principal pictures in this room were left to the Nation by the late Dr. Mond, and several of them are among the gallery's finest possessions. Recently two pictures, not belonging to the Bequest, were hung in this room. These are **The Triumph of Chastity** (No. 910) by **LUCA Signorelli** (1441-1523) and the **Return of Ulysses** (No. 911) by **Bernardino Pintoricchio** (1454-1513). The inclusion of these pictures among the Mond Collection is significant since they form part of a mural decoration (destined for the Palazzo Petrucci at Siena) of which Dr. Mond's **Coriolanus and Volumnia** (No. 3929) by **GIROLAMO Genga** (1476?-1551) was the central portion.

Pintoricchio's picture of the **Return of Ulysses** (No. 911) is one of the most popular exhibits in the gallery. It owes its popularity, perhaps, to its attractive subject which portrays the return of the hero, after twenty years of absence from Ithaca, to find his palace besieged with suitors for the hand of his wife Penelope.

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Penelope has long devised an elaborate plan by which to postpone the acceptance of the suitors. She has sworn that she will not remarry until she has finished the tapestry which she spends the day in weaving and the night in unravelling. On the day of her husband's return, Penelope was at her wits' end as her plan had been discovered and all hope of further postponement was lost.

Pintoricchio shows us Penelope at her loom, with the suitors standing around her. One of the suitors has apparently been hunting, for he bears a hawk upon his arm. In the doorway stands the wanderer Ulysses, returned in the nick of time.

The picture is not only delightful as a decoration but also as a reflection of the artist's observance of detail. The loom forms the principal part of the design and plays a charming counter-pattern with the tessellated floor. The lady is pressing the treadles with her sandled feet whilst her handmaid sits beside her winding the thread on to a little hand loom. On the ground, a playful cat is enjoying a ball of thread and on the high frame of the loom is a bird.

Above the head of Penelope hang a bow and a quiver of arrows, the possessions of her husband.

Through the window, we see a few of the adventures which befell Ulysses and his companions during their travels. On the left is the island of the enchantress Circe who has turned some of the companions into swine, whilst further to the right we see the ship of Ulysses with the hero bound to the mast, the only way in which he can resist the temptations of the Sirens with which the waters are infested.

Little is known of Pintoricchio's life. He worked en-

THE MOND ROOM

tirely in Siena and never went to Florence. The rumour goes that he was left to die of starvation by his wife who deserted him for a soldier in the Sienese Guard.

Among the other treasures of the Mond Room, popular taste always selects, as its favourite, the **Madonna and Child with Saint John** (No. 3935), by **BERNARDINO LUINI** (1475-c. 1532), an artist who bears sufficient likeness with his master Leonardo only to bring him into odious comparison with that great and universal genius.

A picture which deserves more discerning study is the sumptuous **Madonna and Child** (No. 3911) by **GEN-TILE BELLINI** (1426/9-1507), but more interesting still are the **Scenes from the Life of Saint Zenobius** (Nos. 3918/19), by **ALESSANDRO BOTTICELLI** (1444-1510), examples of the artist's declining years when his painting became metallically sharp and his mind contrastingly blurred through a state of semi-mysticism induced by the fall of Savonarola.

The pearl of the MOND COLLECTION is the **Crucifixion** (No. 3943) by **RAPHAEL** (1483-1520). In this picture we have an interesting example of Raphael's youthful precocity. The picture was painted about 1501 when Raphael was eighteen years old, and it clearly reflects the influence of his master Perugino. The conception is based upon some drawings by Perugino and the likeness to the elder artist is so great as to make the work of the pupil almost indistinguishable from that of the master.

Raphael has inherited Perugino's love of spacious landscape and, even at this early age, he can paint a distant city under a turquoise sky in a way which no one has since been able to excel.

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In this picture of the Crucifixion, the painter's insistence upon formal design has amounted to a mannerism. The Cross forms the centre of the composition and it is balanced on either side by an equal number of figures. Above, are two angels each holding little cups in which to receive the Blood, and below, on the left, are the Virgin and St. Jerome, and on the right the Magdalene and St. John. Everything is designed so that the one side should be the exact complement of the other. Above the Cross, on the left, is the Sun and, on the right, the Moon. Each of the angels has her foot upon a cloud and the ribbons of their dresses tactfully repeat each other in design. Even the hair of the kneeling figures waves in a symmetrical pattern, a phenomenon which in less miraculous circumstances would be impossible since nothing but a marvel indeed could induce the wind to blow both ways at the same time.

The Mother and Child (No. 3948) by **TITIAN** (1480 ?-1576) is a characteristic and beautiful example of the master's later style. He has rejected the brilliant colours of his heyday and replaced them by a scheme of reds and russet browns. Like Rembrandt, Titian came to consider that the elements of mystery and depth can best be suggested by dark pigments, a philosophy of which this picture is a telling revelation.

OTHER NOTABLE PICTURES IN THE MOND ROOM

- CORREGGIO.** *Angels' Heads* (Nos. 3920/3921).
DOSSO DOSSI. *Adoration of the Kings* (No. 3924).
BOLTRAFFIO. *Portrait of a Man* (No. 3916).
G. FERRARI. *St. Andrew* (No. 3925).
PALMA VECCHIO. *Flora* (No. 3939).

THE VENETIAN SCHOOL

IN order to appreciate the art of the Venetian School it is as well to know something of the circumstances in which it was brought to light.

The art of Venice is the antithesis of the art of Florence, and inasmuch as the clue to Florentine painting is its poetic intellectualism, so is the keynote of that of Venice its opulent magnificence. Science, indeed, was not the pivot of Venetian life as it had been in Florence, and the men of Venice, though learned, were lively, and, for them, the sumptuous finery of fair colours and the carnival of living were the things which counted most.

The political status of Venice differed from that of other Italian cities. Owing to her seagirt position, Venice was undisturbed by the wave of civic discord and militaristic tyranny which was sweeping through Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. As her neighbouring cities declined, so did Venice flourish and she became, at last, a metropolis of commercial and political prosperity. Being on the direct road to the East she enjoyed a luxurious trade with Constantinople and, in the cosmopolitan pageantry of her existence, there was reflected the splendour of East and West combined.

The Venetian artists worked with an aim entirely different from that of the Florentines. Their work was not destined to decorate some cool cloister but the walls of rich and profusely ornamented palaces. This city of lagoons and sunsets had no building which was not palatial and the churches as well as the houses of the great were incomparably luxurious.

It is not, then, surprising that the art which was to adorn this architecture, whether in the form of sculp-

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ture, tapestry or painting, should have been of an appropriate magnificence.

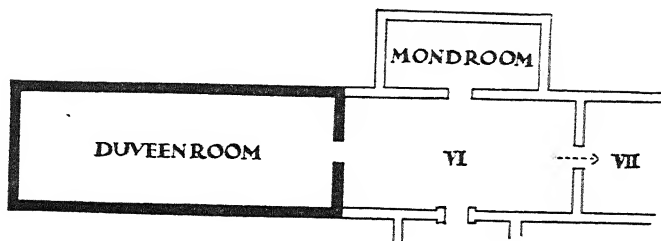
N.B.—The Venetian School is represented in the National Gallery by three great rooms, arranged, as far as possible, in chronological order.

The Duveen Room contains the earliest pictures of this School.

Room VI displays the middle period, from Antonello da Messina to Giorgione and Palma Vecchio.

Room VII is devoted to the great masters of the Venetian High Renaissance.

THE DUVEEN ROOM



THE collection of early Venetian pictures which hangs in the new Duveen Room reveals most clearly the way in which the foundations of Venetian painting were laid down. It is not usually realized that the painting of Venice was not exclusively national in origin but the result of a concurrence of tributary streams which, starting from such neighbouring sources as **Verona, Padua and Ferrara**, met together at Venice and formed, thereby, one of the greatest rivers of art which the world has ever seen.

In the Duveen Room we see examples of all these provincial groups and we can trace the development of Venetian painting, from its beginnings with **Pisanello** of **Verona** to the mature artistic achievements of **Mantegna** of **Padua**, the circle at **Ferrara** and of **Crivelli** from **Ascoli in the Marshes**.

PISANELLO (c. 1399–1455) ranks among the most important founders of the Venetian School. He was, indeed, one of the early artists who, coming to Venice from the provinces, brought a new refreshment to the feeble native tradition of Venetian painting. In 1420, commissions were sent out for the decoration of the Ducal Palace in Venice and Pisanello came from **Verona** to help in this great work.

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Pisanello was a lavish decorator and brilliant colours and fair ornamentation were of great account with him. He had also a profound appreciation of æsthetic science and his work as medallist made him famous throughout Europe for his mastery of economical design.

It is, therefore, curious that in the **Vision of Saint Eustace** (No. 1436) the artist shows not the slightest feeling for composition. The picture—a very early work—reveals only a rudimentary knowledge of scientific construction and the problem of perspective is left almost unsolved. The artist has placed the saint on the one side and the stag on the other and has filled up the remaining space with as many flora and fauna as the limited proportions of the panel will allow.

Pisanello shows a naïve delight in the representation of exotic animals and he has crammed into the picture as many as thirty-seven birds and beasts. Each one is the result of patient study and careful draughtsmanship, as the many excellent preliminary sketches for these animals which can be seen in the print rooms of European art galleries will show. Among this varied menagerie, we can detect various forms of deer, swans, pelicans, herons, geese, and also a bear and a rabbit. Even Saint Eustace's hounds are strangely varied and range from an elegant greyhound to a mongrel.

The picture represents the incident when Saint Eustace, out hunting by a forest lake, was suddenly confronted with a stag bearing the crucifix between his antlers. In his portrayal of the fantasy the artist has shown a taste for realism. The startled saint has pulled his horse up sharply and one of his hounds shows his teeth—the only one to see the Vision.

This famous picture is strangely Oriental in feeling

THE DUVEEN ROOM

and may have been inspired by some Eastern source. This exotic effect may be intensified by the darkening of the tones, for the foliage has now blackened almost to obscurity and the waters of the lake and its little rivulet, now almost indistinguishable, were once an azure blue.

St. Anthony and St. George (No. 776) is a later work revealing a less arbitrary design, but it shows almost as great a delight in naturalistic detail and animal life again plays its part. The picture is unorthodox in conception since the saintly types are curiously reversed. The ancient hermit looks far more furious than the slayer of the Dragon who stands meekly by, and even Saint Anthony's boar has caught something of his master's ferocity since he appears to have induced St. George's dragon into a state of nervous resignation.

The Saints are rapt in earnest conversation and seem indifferent to the Vision of the Virgin and Child which is appearing in the sky.

In spite of the impression made by Pisanello of Verona, Venice was not yet sufficiently strong in intellectual stimulus to support an independent school of painting and it was from her neighbouring city of Padua that a further artistic influence was to radiate. Padua, being the seat of a famous University, was the centre of an intellectual activity which had no peer in Venice and a school of painting (under Squarcione) arose there which was to have a dominating influence upon the development of North Italian art.

The Paduan painter, Squarcione, though of comparatively little worth as an artist, was invaluable as a teacher, and among his large school of pupils was that

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most learned of painters, **ANDREA MANTEGNA** (1431-1506).

Mantegna was, above all, an intellectual painter and he possessed a wealth of classical learning. We are told that he belonged to a society of antiquaries whom he assisted in the excavation of classical remains. We know, also, that he possessed a fine collection of sculpture, the sale of which is said to have broken his heart.

Mantegna's academic scholarship and his love of sculpture are clearly reflected in his painting and he formed his conceptions most rigidly in the moulds of Greece and Rome. Our **Triumph of Scipio** (No. 902) is a brilliant revelation of Mantegna's passion for sculpture and the antique, for in it we see a severely classical subject executed in Grisaille—the imitation of sculpture in paint.

The **Agony in the Garden** (No. 1417) is an intensely intellectual work and the composition is the outcome of much scientific meditation. In the foreground is the group of sleeping apostles—all in foreshortened perspective; and these form the base of the pyramidal composition made by the rock which supports the Central Figure.

The road which winds its way towards the city leads one's eye inwards to meet Pilate and the band of soldiers who are advancing to arrest the Saviour.

There are many interesting details in the picture. In the distance we see Mantegna's native city of Padua with a view of Donatello's most recent work, the equestrian statue of Gattamelata, which actually stands in the square before the cathedral but is here placed by the painter, for purposes of visibility, upon a high pillar towering over the city walls. On the road and on the



DUVEEN ROOM

PISANELLO : The Vision of St. Eustace

[No. 1136]

THE DUVEEN ROOM

rock, rabbits are playing and in the water-course are two white storks. A large bird, of the raven variety, sits watching from a tree. The heavens too are troubled by the great event and an angelic vision, seen only by the Saviour, is appearing in the clouds.

Mantegna's picture (with another version of the same subject [in Room VI], by his brother-in-law, Giovanni Bellini) was painted from a sketch, now in the British Museum, by the father of the Bellini brothers, Jacopo da Bellini.

The third provincial group which was to have so strong an influence upon the school of Venice was the circle of artists from **Ferrara**, a city of great learning and the centre of a cultivated court.

Of the group of Ferrarese the most considerable artists are Tura and Cossa. **COSIMO TURA** (1420?–1495) is represented in this room by four works, all of which bear witness to his sculptural conception and scientific dexterity. The **Allegorical Figure** (No. 3070) is a labyrinth of grotesque embellishment and the throne upon which the woman is seated is adorned with every sort of marine detail in which no shell seems too tortuous nor any fish too spinous to please the artist's fancy. The **St. Jerome in the Desert** (No. 773) is a more sober work and the artist has depicted the Saint beating himself in penance until the blood drips from his breast. Above the Saint sits an owl with a frog in his claws, and lower down is a woodpecker; in the left background the Saint's lion drinks from a stream. Above, on the left, monks are returning to their monastery along a precipitous mountain path. On the right are two kneeling figures and above them is a field with cattle.

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Tura's masterpiece in the Gallery is the **Madonna Enthroned** (No. 772), in which the mannered perfection of the artist's technique is shown to its best advantage. The Virgin is seated upon a throne embellished with all kinds of learned symbolism, whilst, below, two Angels are working an organ in solemn concentration.

FRANCESCO DEL COSSA (1435?-1477) was Tura's ardent follower, and our unique example of his work, **St. Vincent Ferrer** (No. 597), displays the artist in a mood of gaunt austerity. A more pleasing representation of the Ferrarese School is seen in the naturalistic little **Israelites Gathering Manna** (No. 1217) by **ERCOLE DI ROBERTI** (1450?-1496).

The pride of the Duveen Room is the wonderful group of paintings by another of Squarcione's famous pupils, **CARLO CRIVELLI** (1430/35-c. 1495). The National Gallery possesses the finest extant collection of works by Crivelli, and it is important, on this account alone, to assess the significance of the artist in the history of Venetian painting.

Crivelli is a paradox among artists, since, although he is not chronologically the earliest artist of the Venetian School, he is, in certain qualities of style, among the most archaic. Like Janus, he looks before him and behind. In some respects he is ahead of his time and in others he seems to belong to an earlier age. It was owing to these contradictory qualities that Crivelli left no artistic inheritors and remained an isolated figure in the sphere of Venetian painting. Contemporary painters could admire his precision and his love of accurate observation, but they demanded something freer and broader in painting than the fastidious detail and rather peevish

THE DUVEEN ROOM

types which Crivelli could give them. They wondered, therefore, at his brilliance and passed on.

The progression and shortcomings of Crivelli are clearly revealed in the great **Demidoff Altarpiece** (No. 788), so called since it was once in the possession of Prince Demidoff at Florence. This picture, which dominates the new Duveen Gallery, is composed of many parts¹ and represents the Madonna and Child enthroned among the Saints.

The altarpiece is a curious mixture of elements archaic and modern. The artist has embellished his picture with gold relief and real jewels, a barbaric luxury which recalls the extravagance of the Byzantine era. The Virgin's crown is set with gems and the relief of her robes and of those of the Saints is raised in thick gesso. St. Peter's breastplate and mitre are sumptuously enamelled and his keys are attached with a piece of real cord. Along with this archaic style of applied realism the picture displays a highly modern understanding of form and line and many problems are solved, of whose existence only a very progressive artist could be aware.

Crivelli's masterpiece in the National Gallery is the **Annunciation** (No. 739). In this gorgeous picture Crivelli's scientific technique and mathematical knowledge of perspective are most clearly shown. The picture is a veritable kaleidoscope of colour and a treasury of significant detail. We are looking at a Venetian street, most truly and artistically designed and more than ordinarily magnificent. On the right is a profusely ornamented palace of which the top storey is an open

¹ It is a polyptych in three tiers and thirteen panels (see next page).

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

PLAN OF THE DEMIDOFF ALTARPIECE

ST. JEROME
WITH
THE
CARDINAL'S
HAT

ST.
MICHAEL
WITH
THE
DRAGON

ST. LUCY
WITH
HER
EYES
ON A
SALVER

ST. PETER
WITH
THE
SAW

ST. FRANCIS
WITH THE
HABIT OF
POVERTY

ST. ANDREW
WITH THE
CROSS

ST. STEPHEN
WITH THE
STONES AND
BOOK

ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS
WITH THE
CHURCH AND
BOOK

ST. JOHN
THE
BAPTIST
WITH
THE
HAIRY
COAT

ST. PETER
WITH
HIS
KEYS

THE
MADONNA
AND
CHILD

ST.
CATHARINE
OF
ALEXANDRIA
WITH
HER
WHEEL

ST.
DOMINIC
WITH
THE
BOOK
AND
LILY



DUVEEN ROOM

CARLO CRIVELLI: The Annunciation

[No. 739]

THE DUVEEN ROOM

loggia where one could take the air in summer weather such as was a common practice in Venice at the time. Below, we see the Virgin kneeling at her *prie-dieu*. Her apartment is richly furnished. She has a lofty bed decorated with cushions of elaborate embroidery and the curtain which should hide the bed by day is pulled back for our benefit. On a shelf at the back of the room stand various homely things such as a candlestick, some plates, a jar, and a flask of water.

The Virgin's window is barred and the dove, directed by the heavenly rays, has flown in through a hole in the wall discreetly planned for the purpose.

In the street outside the palace kneel the Angel Gabriel and St. Emidius, the patron Saint of Ascoli, the artist's native city. The Saint holds a model of Ascoli in his hands. The Angel and the Saint are invisible to all except the Virgin and the life of the city is going on, ordinarily, around them. On the left, upon some steps, two monks are engaged in conversation with an elegant Venetian gentleman whilst a little child gazes thoughtfully into the street. Further back, at the cross-roads, walks a man of learned appearance, and beneath the archway which bridges the street a young man shades his eyes from the heavenly light. He alone seems to be aware that anything unusual is occurring. Behind the archway is another street, and here we can see several people, including a grand lady and her confidant, and a poor woman with a pot upon her head.

The picture is ornamented with many elaborate accessories and a wealth of crystalline detail. From the palace loggia hangs a rich Oriental carpet which a peacock is eyeing anxiously. Pots of flowers adorn

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the window ledge and a bird-cage hangs near by. Across the windows and along the outside wall of the palace are clamps on which long poles are fixed. These are supports for blinds or awnings which could be stretched across the street when the heat became too great. The arch in the street supports a verandah on which a man has been reading. He has laid his book down upon a rug overhanging the parapet whilst he peruses a letter brought to him by a servant. Above the arch is a pigeon cote and the bird's perches are small rods curiously attached to the outside walls. The walls of the houses are elaborately adorned. The palace windows are crowned with groups of golden angels and the arch is decorated with a handsome medallion.

The Virgin's window has a little myrtle on the sill and on the ground below are a vegetable marrow and an apple. Crivelli thought no picture complete without the inclusion of some garden produce, and here we find no exception to his rule.

At the foot of the picture are three coats-of-arms and an inscription. The arms are those of the Bishop of Ascoli, of the Pope and of the City of Ascoli itself. The inscription, 'LIBERTAS ECCLESIASTICA' (Ecclesiastical Freedom), refers to a recent papal bull which had conferred municipal liberty upon the city.

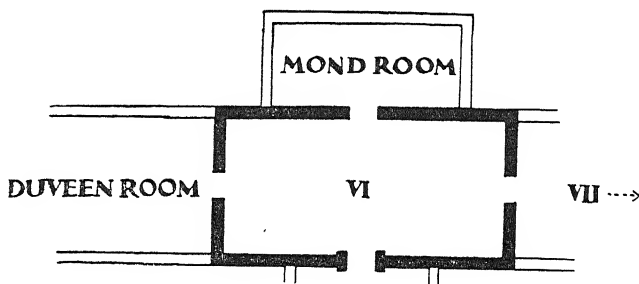
Little is known about Crivelli's life. He was a recluse by disposition and spent most of his time at Ascoli in the Marshes, a small town near Venice and out of the main current of artistic progress. Although Crivelli was regarded somewhat as a provincial, his genius did not pass unrecognized and towards the end of his career he was given the title of MILES (Knight).

THE DUVEEN ROOM

Most of his pictures are signed, and his later works can be fixed in date by the addition of this title to the artist's name.

The National Gallery possesses a set of nine Crivellis. Of the remaining seven the finest are the **Beato Ferretti** (No. 668), which contains the unusual detail of a duck swimming with a duckling in a pool, and the **Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome and Saint Sebastian** (No. 724), in which a swallow has perched upon the throne above the Virgin's head.

ROOM VI



ROOM VI is devoted to artists of the middle period of Venetian painting and ranges from Antonello da Messina to Giorgione and Palma Vecchio.

ANTONELLO DA MESSINA (c. 1430–1479). Up to the end of the fifteenth century most of the painting in Italy had been executed in the flatter medium of tempera¹ rather than in the more luminous medium of Oil. Oil painting, however, was prevalent in Northern Europe, and in the Low Countries it was practically the only method in use.

The rôle played by Antonello da Messina in the development of Italian painting was an important one, since it was he who first introduced into Italy the permanent use of the oil medium, thus forming the link between the North and the South.

Many legends have arisen around his name. Vasari states that Antonello was so greatly impressed by a Netherlandish picture which he had seen in Italy that he travelled to Flanders especially to learn its secret. Others have said that in the Netherlands he became the pupil of Petrus Christus, an associate of Van Eyck. It seems more probable, however, that Antonello da

¹ See Introductory Note (iii).

ROOM VI

Messina never journeyed to the North but learnt in Italy the technique of oil painting from Petrus Christus who was, at one time, employed with Antonello at the court of the Duke of Milan.

The National Gallery is rich in having four examples of the art of this distinguished painter.

The **Salvator Mundi** (No. 673) is Antonello's earliest signed work and is dated 1465. The picture is painted entirely in oils and is more Flemish than Italian in character. It is executed with a geometrical symmetry and careful finish. It will be noticed, indeed, that the artist has lowered the position of the Saviour's pointing hand and that the outlines of the fingers, as they were in their first position, are still visible.

The **Self-Portrait** (?) (No. 1141) has an equally miniature-like refinement despite its breadth of modelling. Nothing is left to the imagination and even the remains of the artist's shaven beard are indicated with extraordinary precision.

The **St. Jerome in His Study** (No. 1418) has caused the critics much confusion and for a long time the picture was considered to be of Flemish origin; it has been attributed even to Van Eyck and to Memlinc. The picture is a treasury of fastidious detail. We look through an arch into an imposing hall with a vaulted roof and tessellated floor. The Saint's desk, which is dominated by a crucifix, is raised upon a dais in the middle of the hall and a corridor runs on either side. The right-hand corridor forms a colonnade of slender pillars under which Saint Jerome's lion approaches his master.

Saint Jerome, sitting at his desk in a chair of inlaid wood, is reading a richly-illuminated book. His car-

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

dinal's hat lies on a bench behind him and by the side of his table is a high cupboard with wide shelves containing jars, books, and a patterned box. His inkhorn hangs on a nail conveniently fixed to the side of the cupboard. On the outside wall of the cupboard hangs a towel and, lower down, a small scroll, inscribed with illegible characters, is pinned to the side of the desk.

On a ledge, in line with the Saint's feet, are a vase containing a small myrtle shrub, a pot of pinks and a cat. At the foot of the three steps, leading up to the dais, St. Jerome has left his slippers. On the threshold of the room we see a partridge and a peacock, with a water-bowl from which they can drink. The partridge is often represented as an emblem of solitary meditation, since St. John the Evangelist, in his extreme old age, tamed one and thus the bird became the associate of saintly hermitage.

St. Jerome's study is luxuriously arranged for light and air and, in a kind of clerestory, we see three sets of lancet windows behind which swallows are flying. At the end of each of the corridors there is a window looking on to a pleasant landscape. Various interesting details can be detected through the window in the left-hand corridor. Two men and a white dog are going down a pathway towards a river on which is a boat containing two people, while, on the far bank among the rushes, is a child in red and in the distance is a castle which two men are approaching on horseback.

The Crucifixion (No. 1166) is a late example of Antonello's art and probably his last work. The composition is impressive. The Cross, with Christ raised high in the heavens, dominates the picture and bisects the cup-like design formed by the figures of the Virgin

ROOM VI

and St. John. The tragedy of the scene is intensely felt and the faces of the seated figures show the fatigue of profound suffering.

The landscape reveals Antonello's love of details. In the middle distance are the walls of Jerusalem before which people are walking or riding on horseback.

The figures of the Maries are seen on the left approaching the Calvary, whilst, behind them, towards the right, are two men with a ladder—perhaps Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea—coming to take Christ down from the Cross.

Below the Cross, bones and a skull are curiously interspersed with little plantain-like plants.

Even among a collection of large Italian pictures these little masterpieces of Antonello hold their place. They are conceived in miniature, but their refinement never merges into triviality and they run no risk of becoming swamped in a morass of larger works.

A delightful painter of this central period of Venetian art is **MARCO BASAITI** (op. 1490-1521). This artist is now considered to be the painter of the lovely **Madonna of the Meadow** (No. 599), a picture which was long attributed to Giovanni Bellini.

This picture is beautifully conceived. The figures of the Virgin and Her Child form a central pyramid which is balanced by the elegant counterplay of verticals and horizontals indicated in the landscape background.

The picture reveals not only an appreciation of physical beauty but also a sincere feeling for nature. The Virgin is seated in a delicious meadow. Behind her, on the right, is a city on a hill and on the left we have a vista of blue mountains.

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The middle distance is occupied by figures of peasants grazing their cattle. On the right, a shepherd drives his sheep and, on the left, we see another shepherd, resting. Near by, a stork seems in deadly conflict with a snake whilst a raven watches, unperturbedly, from the leafless branches of a tree.

The picture of the 'Madonna of the Meadow' seems infused with brilliant sunshine, an effect due perhaps to the artist's considerable use of the oil medium. This is, indeed, one of the first pictures in which the technical innovations of Antonello da Messina have been definitely set to proof.

THE BELLINI BROTHERS. GENTILE (1426/9-1507). GIOVANNI (1428/30-1516). With the painting of the brothers **BELLINI** we have a glimpse into the splendour of Venetian art. The Bellinis form part of a great artistic family, since the brothers **GENTILE** and **GIOVANNI** learnt their art in the studio of their father, Jacopo, also a distinguished painter. This artistic circle did not, however, end here, and their sister, Niccolosia, married Mantegna, the great and intellectual painter from Padua. The Bellini brothers became the most fashionable painters in Venice. Gentile was granted the 'Senseria'—the right to collect customs—which amounted to the Freedom of the City and at his death the privilege was passed automatically to his younger brother, Giovanni. This distinction incurred the jealousy of the young Titian who was not granted the right of Senseria until after Giovanni's death.

The most interesting representation in Trafalgar Square of the art of the elder Bellini, **GENTILE**, is the **Portrait of the Sultan Mahommed II** (No. 3099). A Sultan is not an usual subject in painting and surprise



ROOM VI

ANTONELLO DA MESSINA : Portrait of Himself (?)

[No. 1141]

ROOM VI

alone may well attract our attention to the picture. Despite much drastic repainting the portrait of the Sultan is still impressive. In it there is a suggestion of attenuated cruelty, a suggestion indeed which was well justified if rumour can be trusted. It is said that, when Gentile Bellini was summoned to Constantinople to paint the Sultan's portrait, he was requested to take with him a representation of his art. He selected, as a convenient example, the picture of 'Salome with the Baptist's head'—a choice which proved to the taste of the Sultan, whose only complaint was that the artist had shown inaccuracy as to the amount of blood. He thereupon sent for a slave and had him immediately decapitated before the eyes of the artist in order to ascertain whether or not the painter had deprived him of the full savour of the spectacle.

Gentile's portrait of **Fra Teodoro of Urbino as Saint Dominic** (No. 1440) has had a curious history and marks a strange concession to popular taste. It was painted by Gentile as a portrait of Fra Teodoro da Urbino and the name of the sitter can be read, half erased, on the parapet beneath. After the artist's death the picture was removed from his studio and drastic alterations were made. The skull cap was enlarged, the cartellino with Giovanni's signature was added and the picture was sold as a portrait of Saint Dominic.

Gentile's younger brother, **GIOVANNI BELLINI**, is represented in this gallery by many pictures, but the popular taste has always fallen exclusively for the **Portrait of the Doge** (No. 189). Giovanni is said to have painted four doges during his period as state painter, but this sensitive and clear-cut portrait is the only extant example.

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

Leonardo Loredano, the 74th Doge of Venice, is a striking figure in history. He ruled from 1501 to 1521, a period when the eyes of France (under Louis XII and Francis V) and those of England (under Henry VIII) were continually directed towards Venice. The Doge was renowned for his clemency and patriotism and during the wars with France he sent his private plate to the mint to be absorbed into the public currency.

This picture was bought by the Gallery, during the last century, for six hundred and thirty pounds. It would now be worth many thousands.

Giovanni Bellini's **Agony in the Garden** (No. 726) may be interestingly compared with the version of the same subject by Mantegna which we saw in the Duveen Room. Giovanni Bellini's picture is less scientific and more loosely constructed than the work of his brother-in-law, and it does not reveal that acute observation of natural phenomena which makes Mantegna's picture so impressive. It would, indeed, be impossible for the sun, rising behind the hill, to cast its light simultaneously upon the front of the building on the left and on the side of the tower on the right. Nevertheless, to insist upon a flawless naturalism is mere quibble and Bellini's picture is one of transcendent beauty. The tragedy of the scene is portrayed with that profound intensity of feeling so characteristic of all Giovanni Bellini's work. The picture reveals, moreover, a love of colour and it is here that we can most essentially contrast Bellini with Mantegna. To Mantegna colour made little appeal and his painting was conceived in terms of sculpture; to Bellini colour was of a lyrical importance and there is no painting from his hand which is not rich in this respect.

ROOM VI

The artists had, however, a common link in their possession of a dramatic sense and everything which they expressed in paint was the manifestation of some deep emotion.

The small picture **The Blood of the Redeemer** (No. 1233), though a much earlier work (the earliest in our gallery by Giovanni Bellini), is no less sensitive than the *Agony*, and the Christ, who stands upon a tessellated balcony, is a figure of infinite sadness.

The parapet which borders the terrace is decorated with classical reliefs, and we are at once surprised to see that such pagan subjects as the Pipes of Pan and Marcus Scaevola thrusting his hand into the Fire at the command of Lars Porsena are included in a picture of profoundly Christian significance. The reason, however, is not hard to find: the subjects of both these reliefs embody the idea of sacrifice and their classicism is a striking proof of the lasting effects of Bellini's training in the workshops of Padua where the study of antiquity was considered to be the essence of existence.

Giovanni Bellini's pupil and foreman of his studio, **GIAMBATTISTA CIMA** (1460?-1517/18), is abundantly represented in this room. The north wall of Room VI is dominated by the large **Incredulity of Saint Thomas** (No. 816), which, for all its size, is not impressive and not nearly as characteristic of the painter as the series of sweet-faced Madonnas, of which the **Madonna and Child** (No. 300) is an amenable example.

All visitors to Venice rush to see the paintings of **VITTORE CARPACCIO** (c. 1450-1522), and it is a disappointment to many that this artist is not better represented in the National Gallery. Carpaccio was the

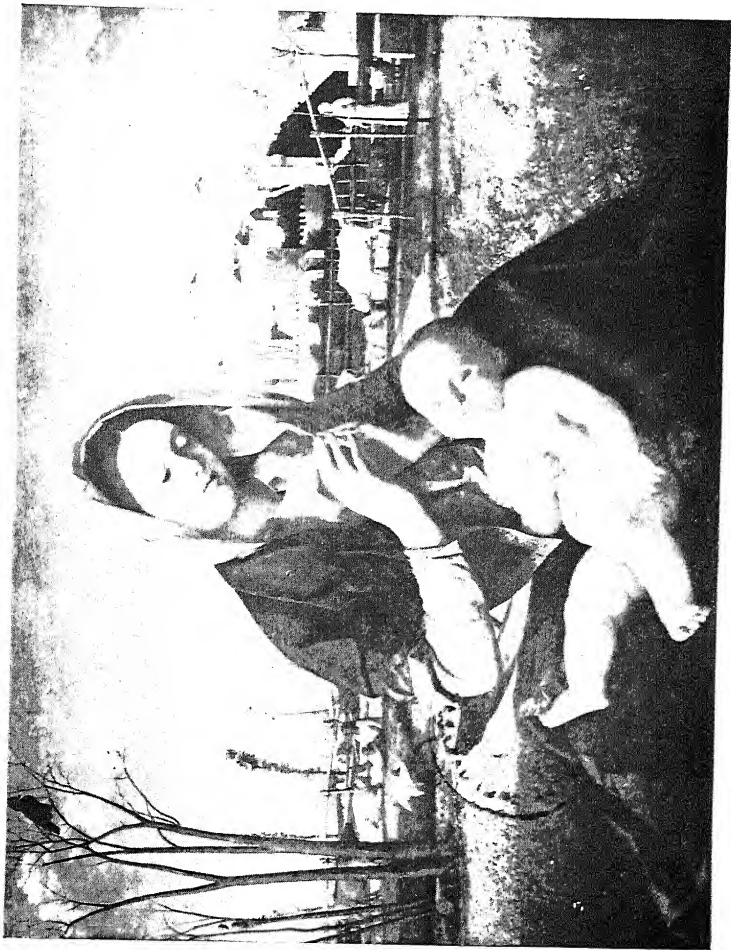
chronicler among Venetian painters and his representations of public festivals afford us illuminating glimpses into the life of fifteenth-century Venice. The art of Carpaccio is usually anecdotal and it is to this quality that he owes his popularity. There is plenty to look at in his pictures and his details are amusing.

Neither of our two pictures gives an adequate idea of Carpaccio's intimate art, but the more interesting of the two is the **Saint Ursula leaving Her Father** (No. 3085). In this picture the artist gives us a fresh representation of an ever-popular subject. St. Ursula was a noble maiden of high degree who left her father in order to frustrate his attempts to force her into a pagan marriage. She departed, with many companions, to uncivilized regions in Northern Germany where, as a preacher of the Gospel, she met her death and martyrdom.

At last we come to the first great landmark in later Venetian painting, **GIORGIONE (1477-1510)**. The work of this most lyrical of Venetian painters is extremely rare and the National Gallery is fortunate in possessing even one example of his art. The paintings by this artist which are considered genuine have been whittled down to a minimum; there are, indeed, only two of his works which are held beyond suspicion—namely 'The Tempest' in the Palazzo Giovanelli in Venice¹ and the famous altarpiece at Castelfranco.

Giorgione is an artist of enormous repute and has long been the centre of discussion. Everything attributed to him is at once censoriously examined, and our little picture of **A Man in Armour** (No. 269) has fallen well within the circle of misgivings and doubts.

¹ Exhibited at Burlington House, January, 1930.



ROOM VI

MARCO BASAITI: 'The Madonna of the Meadow'
[No. 599]

ROOM VI

There are, however, many qualities in the picture which may assure us of its authenticity and most modern critics have veered round to considering it as genuine. The picture is almost certainly a sketch for the *Castelfranco Altarpiece* and it is on the criterion of a preliminary study that it must be judged and testified.

We see before us the model, oppressed by the weight of his armour and wearily waiting for his hours of standing to end. His listless expression, his position of fatigue, unsuitable for a warrior saint, and his armour stained with rust (it would be polished until spotless for the finished picture) all support the theory of the experimental sketch.

Next to nothing is known about Giorgione's life. We are told that he was passionately musical, a fact to which the famous 'Concert' in the Pitti Gallery may bear witness. But his life cannot have been a very prolific one, for he died at the age of thirty-three of the epidemic of plague which was sweeping through Venice at the time. Fortunately Giorgione's colleague and friend, the young Titian, was away from Venice at this period and was working on some frescoes at Padua. It is well to remember that it was in this way that Providence spared us the fine flower of Titian's long and fruitful life.

The Golden Age (No. 1173) was once considered to be by Giorgione. It is now, however, decided that it cannot be from the hand of the master but must be the work of a close associate, and it is even conceivable that the picture may be one of the earliest works of Titian who first came under the influence of Giorgione when he was fifteen years of age.

No one has definitely decided upon the authorship

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

of the picture or satisfactorily interpreted its meaning. There have been many titles, including that of 'Solomon and his Attendants', but the present name of 'The Golden Age' seems as fitting as any other for this vague, mysterious reverie.

An interesting picture in this room, the **St. Jerome in His Study** (No. 694), so long attributed to Catena, is now assigned to **PALMA VECCHIO (1480-1528)**. This new baptism may well cause surprise since the neat restraint of this picture seems hardly in accordance with the loose sentimentalism of Palma's usual style.

The keynote of this picture is its serenity and spotlessness. The Saint sits in his study at a desk of unpolished wood. Everything is ideally spick and span. There is no particle of dust to be seen (not even in the cupboard doors) and even the sky is cloudless.

Beyond the saint's desk are shelves in which are some books, a flask, a candlestick and a blue and yellow jar. St. Jerome's lion lies asleep upon the floor and a partridge—the associate of hermit saints¹—looks wonderingly at its master's slippers.

Much discussion has arisen over the colour of the Cardinal's hat which lies on the floor beside St. Jerome. The artist has made it blue instead of the usual scarlet. It is difficult to give a definite reason for this eccentricity, but it seems likely that Palma wished to contrast the red of the saint's robe with a counterplay of blue. This motif in blue is started in the hat and is echoed in the saint's scarf, on the leaves of his book and in the sky beyond.

The picture is a fine work and combines a fastidious

¹ Cp. 'St. Jerome', by Antonello.

ROOM VI

perfection of technique with a breadth of planning and a nobility of design.

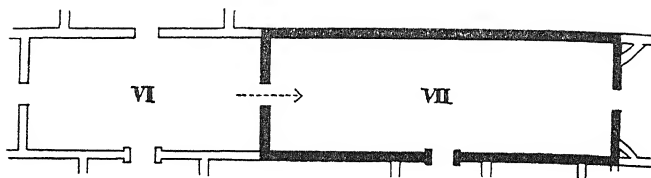
Another picture by Palma, **The Warrior Adoring** (No. 234), has also been attributed to Catena, but it is now considered too vital an achievement to come from Catena's rather feeble hand.

The picture reveals a love of glowing colour and a sense of clear-cut design. The Madonna sits upon a terrace overlooking a city whilst a warrior kneels before her in adoration.

Despite its stately composition, the picture has rather a theatrical effect, and the portly warrior and his horse, so trained to patience, are irresistibly reminiscent of Grand Opera.

VENETIAN PICTURES OF THE HIGH RENAISSANCE

ROOM VII



IN this room, perhaps the greatest in the National Gallery, we can enjoy the full pageantry of the Venetian High Renaissance. The central figure of this most magnificent of epochs was **TITIAN** (1480?–1576), and inasmuch as he dominated the Venice of his time so does he hold sway among the Venetians in Trafalgar Square. In him, all the essential characteristics of the School are brought together and he is at once lyrical, passionate, sumptuous, romantic and, withal, restrained.

After Giorgione's death in 1510 Titian became the leader of the arts and he remained in a supreme position throughout his ninety-six years of life. Even the greatest of his contemporaries formed a group around him and were content to learn at the feet of this patriarch of artistic tradition.

Titian was the most fashionable painter of his day. He fulfilled all kinds of commissions and painted every sort of picture. In the National Gallery almost every facet of his art is represented. Of our nine¹ masterpieces, the earliest in date is the **Ariosto or Portrait of a Man** (No. 1944). In this picture the artist does not greatly insist upon psychological disclosure and every-

¹ Excluding the **Portrait of a Young Man** lent by Lord Irwin.



ROOM VII

TITIAN : A Family Group

[No. 4452]

ROOM VII

thing is subordinated to the painting of the sleeve. Here Titian transcends the suggestion of mere volume and presents the very substance of the material. The face of the sitter reveals no special character and the picture could as well be labelled 'A Portrait of a Quilted Satin Sleeve'. This picture may be interestingly compared with the **Poet** (No. 636) by **PALMA VECCHIO**. Both pictures are excellent examples of romantic portraiture—a style invented by Giorgione. Palma's picture has been much disputed and has been given both to Giorgione and to Titian.

The **Noli Me Tangere** (No. 270) shows an advance in the artist's æsthetic conception. In this picture he does not allow his effect to depend merely upon brilliance of technique but introduces the additional attraction of a significant design in which there is a proportionate balance both of line and colour. The angle of the tree is carefully set so that the eye can pass easily from it down to the figure of the Magdalene whilst the slightly bent position of Christ echoes the outline of the hill. It is apparent that Titian intended the picture to be based on a cross-shaped composition since the hair of the Magdalene, once flying in the wind, has been brought close to the neck. The first position of the hair can still be seen beneath the upper surface, and it is immediately evident that such a placing was rejected by the artist since it would have broken the continuity of the sweeping line formed by the tree and the kneeling figure.

This perfect poise of line and mass intensifies the religious sincerity of the picture and is the result of the artist's reflective discrimination rather than a mathematical mannerism.

A study of the landscape background fixes the date of 'Noli Me Tangere' to Titian's Giorgionesque period (1509-14), since the buildings on the right are identical with those painted by Titian for Giorgione's 'Sleeping Venus' at Dresden.¹

Bacchus and Ariadne (No. 35) is universally considered as the masterpiece of the National Gallery. It is, indeed, the most complete of paintings and represents the zenith of pictorial expression. It fulfils all the functions of a great picture and, in it, such æsthetic elements as unity of composition, harmony of colour, vitality of expression and infinity of interest meet in due proportion.

With this picture we are translated into a very different world from that of the quiet garden of 'Noli Me Tangere'. The 'Bacchus and Ariadne' is a piece of sensuous mythology fully reflecting the paganism of the High Renaissance. The picture portrays the surprise of Ariadne at Naxos by Bacchus who is returning, with his companions, from a sacrifice. The god, immediately fired by love, springs from his leopard-drawn chariot to pursue the lady. In the distance we see the white sails of the ship in which Ariadne's husband, the recreant Theseus, is departing.

The picture has been so frequently admired and described that any fresh observation seems impossible. The design, based on a sweeping curve, has been aptly compared with a comet of which Ariadne is the star and Bacchus and his suite the tail.

The beauty of the landscape, bathed in a romantic twilight, would be impossible to excel. There is no pass-

¹ They are also similar to the buildings in 'Sacred and Profane Love' in the Villa Borghese at Rome.

ROOM VII

age which is not intensely wonderful and it is only by long study and close examination that the picture can be properly appreciated. The work is everywhere ornamented with exquisite detail. The outstretched hand of Ariadne, the crown of stars above her head, Bacchus' wreath of ivy leaves and the little flowers of the foreground are all executed with an entrancing delicacy.

On the ground is an ass's head, the symbol of Bacchic festivity, and close by lies a jar on which the name of the artist is inscribed.

'Bacchus and Ariadne' was one of the earliest purchases for the Gallery¹ and must at once have lent a cachet of magnificence to the National Collection.

This early nucleus of our Gallery was rich in Titian's work since the acquisition which preceded the Bacchus was the *Venus and Adonis* (No. 34) from the Angerstein Collection. This picture, when compared with the 'Bacchus and Ariadne', cannot help but be an anticlimax, even though it is a masterpiece of brilliant draughtsmanship and evenly poised design.

The Family Group (No. 4452) is one of the Gallery's most epoch-making acquisitions.² There are, indeed, scarcely any pictures in the National Collection which can rival it for generosity of colour and for opulence of tone. It depicts the male members of a distinguished Venetian family (perhaps the family of Cornaro

¹ It was bought in 1826 in a lot with two other pictures for £9,000. Its present value would be more than twenty times this sum.

² It was purchased for this Gallery in 1929 from the collection of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick. The picture once belonged to Van Dyck, and it inspired the Flemish artist in many of his later portraits. Compare it for instance with Van Dyck's 'Balbi Children' in Room XIV.

or Vendramin) worshipping before an altar. The picture has several times been copied and in an English private collection there is a replica in which the altar-table is left bare. This was an English copy dating from the time of the Reformation when the stricture of Protestantism enforced a veto upon ecclesiastical adornments and even forbade their representation in paint. In this picture Titian makes manifest his admiration for Raphael, for the principal figure of the composition is undoubtedly inspired by the figure of Pope Sixtus in the Sistine Madonna at Dresden.

It will be noticed that the artist has made certain alterations in his picture. The beard of the man who stretches forth his arm was once more voluminous and the figure of the younger member of the family, on the left, has been moved nearer the centre of the picture. The outline of where the face has once been can still be seen on the extreme left-hand side. We have seen in the 'Noli Me Tangere', as well as in 'The Family Group', that Titian was prone to making alterations and this tendency is also noticeable in the **Study for 'La Gloria' (The Trinity Receiving Charles V)** (No. 4222). The changes here are many and a careful examination of the picture will reveal the altered outlines of various figures and of several small details. These changes are not as trivial as they might seem since in the case of this picture they are a convincing proof of its authenticity. The suggestion has been made that this picture is the work of a copyist and is a replica, in smaller scale, of Titian's great painting in the Prado at Madrid. These alterations, however, would be an anathema to the copyist whose aim is never artistic adjustment but a faultless replica of the original. The

ROOM VII

National Gallery picture can therefore be stamped as a study by Titian for the painting of the same subject in the Spanish Gallery.

The **Madonna with St. Catharine** (No. 635) shows Titian in a less fervid mood and it is difficult, after contemplating such a stupendous example as 'The Family Group', to give this picture the consideration which it deserves. Nevertheless, it is a lovely work and clearly reveals the artist's talent for landscape painting. One feels, indeed, that the picture might well have been a landscape without figures and that the group, gracious as it is, would be happier placed in another setting.

Titian's love of nature was profound and his 'Landscape Scene' in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace is a curiosity among pictures since in Titian's day landscape as the sole interest of a picture was practically unknown.

Titian's fellow pupil, **SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO** (1485?-1547), is represented in this room by the richly coloured **Holy Family** (No. 1450) and by the enormous **Raising of Lazarus** (No. 1). The latter painting has been vastly improved by recent cleaning and some attractive passages of landscape have been revealed. Nevertheless, the work is heavy and too academic to be deeply impressive. One feels, indeed, that its chief interest lies in the fact that it was the first picture to be acquired for the National Collection.

Another well-known contemporary of Titian was **LORENZO LOTTO** (1480-1556). He is a rare painter of varying merit and the National Gallery is lucky in possessing a fine series of his works.

The most famous of our five representations of Lotto's art is the **Lucretia** (No. 4256). This picture is a recent

purchase and was bought in 1927 from the Holford Collection in the now demolished Dorchester House. The technical achievement of the picture has been much admired, but no one has satisfactorily interpreted the meaning of the subject. We see before us a Venetian lady, magnificently apparelled, holding in her hand a drawing of Lucretia about to plunge a dagger into her breast. There seems to be little connection between Lotto's model and the drawing in her hands. The name of the Roman Lucretia has gone down to posterity as the paragon of virtuous resignation since, dishonoured during her husband's absence, she preferred suicide to a life of shame. There must be some reason for the subject of Lucretia being chosen for the drawing held by the lady in the picture and it is possible that her name was also Lucretia and that the connection lay no deeper than mere nomenclature. On the other hand, it seems conceivable that the lady was in the same plight as the Roman woman and contemplated following her noble example. This possibility is supported by the Latin inscription on the table, which reads, 'AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF LUCRETIA, LET NO SHAMELESS WOMAN LIVE'.

The popular taste has always fallen for the pictures of **GIAMBATTISTA MORONI (1520/25-1578)** and especially for **The Lawyer** (No. 742) and **The Tailor** (No. 697). These famous pictures are not the work of a profound thinker and do not venture far beyond the bounds of straightforward common-sense.

Moroni preferred naturalism above all else and it was his aim to paint things as they really are. Idealization or expansion of the commonplace seemed to him mere frippery and a tailor painted by him remains a tailor

ROOM VII

and is not translated into the nobleman that other Venetian painters would have made of him. But in spite of their limitations, the Tailor and the Lawyer are precious possessions of our National Collection and their popularity is by no means a slur upon public discrimination.

Hardly less popular and perhaps more accomplished is the celebrated **Italian Nobleman** (No. 1025) by **MORETTO DA BRESCIA** (1498-1555).

The artist whose name is usually associated with that of Titian in the development of Venetian painting is **TINTORETTO** (1518-1594).¹ This artist, chiefly remembered for his decoration of the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice, is represented in Trafalgar Square by three great masterpieces of which the most widely known is **The Origin of the Milky Way** (No. 1313).

The picture represents Jupiter, attended by his eagle, descending from Olympus and placing the infant Hercules at the breast of the Goddess Juno. The milk which shoots from the breast forms the constellation of the 'Milky Way'. On the left we see Cupid with his darts and shackles of love and on the right are two peacocks, the emblems of the goddess.

Tintoretto's picture is a masterpiece of swinging rhythm and complete design. The basic pattern is a cross formed by the reclining Juno and the approaching Jove and the downward swoop of the God is a thing powerful enough to rival the force of Michelangelo.

This spacious and tremendous picture might well be considered as the realization of Tintoretto's æsthetic

¹ His name means little dyer, and he was so called because his father was a dyer ('*il tintore*').

ideal since it combines Michelangelo's most dynamic design with Titian's richest colouring.

The **St. George and the Dragon** (No. 16) is hardly less imaginative than the 'Milky Way'. Again we see the artist's mastery of sweeping rhythm and dramatic line. The picture has a felicitous unity and everything revolves around the figure of the frightened princess and the combat between the dragon and the knight. The romantic landscape is lit by a swirling vision in the sky and we can discern, amid the gloom, a castle standing on a wind-swept shore.

Tales from the life of St. George are common in Venetian painting and it is as well to know how the story runs. The saint, a knight of Cappadocia, came to Silene to deliver the city from the grievous affliction of a dragon. The monster, who poisoned the inhabitants with his breath, had to be placated with sheep and, later, with children or with any young people upon whom the lot should fall.

St. George, arriving at Silene in the nick of time when the fate had fallen to the King's daughter, rescued the Princess from the monster and induced her to lead it, wounded and resigned, back to the city by the girdle of her garment. The miracle convinced the town of the power of the Christian Faith and St. George baptized the King and all his subjects.

The National Gallery was long without any representation of Tintoretto as a portrait painter, but in 1924 the portrait of **Vincenzo Morosini** (No. 4004) was presented to the Nation to commemorate the centenary of the Gallery and the coming of age of the National Art Collections Fund.

Tintoretto's portrait has a sinister effect and is one of



ROOM VII

TINTORETTO : The Origin of the Milky Way
[No. 1313]

ROOM VII

the few pictures by him which cause us to remember that he assisted in the training of El Greco.

The third and last great painter of the Venetian High Renaissance and the peer of Titian and Tintoretto is **PAOLO VERONESE (1528-1588)**. Living at a time when Venice was at the crest of her prosperity, Veronese found no lack of opportunity for exercising his pictorial pageantry and no palace was too luxurious for him to decorate nor any canvas too vast.

The National Gallery possesses some rich examples of Veronese's work. The two allegorical compositions, **Happy Union** (No. 1326) and **Unfaithfulness** (No. 1318), are magnificently proportioned groups and prove the artist's skill in transforming a pretentious subject into a stimulating melody of form.

Popular opinion has always selected the geometrically designed **The Vision of St. Helena** (No. 1041) as its favourite, but Veronese's supreme craftsmanship and genius for grandiose conceptions is shown to better advantage in the **Family of Darius before Alexander** (No. 294), in which we see the family of the defeated King of Persia doing homage to the greatest of the Macedonians. Veronese, however, has paid no attention to the picture's classical significance and has draped the Greeks and Persians of antiquity in the richest of Venetian brocades.

In former years the princely decoration of Veronese was not given its due regard and the artist was considered as a sort of poor relation of Tintoretto and Titian. But in these more analytical days, when a picture is judged on its æsthetic achievement rather than on its sentimental appeal, Veronese has gained an assured position among the world's immortal artists.

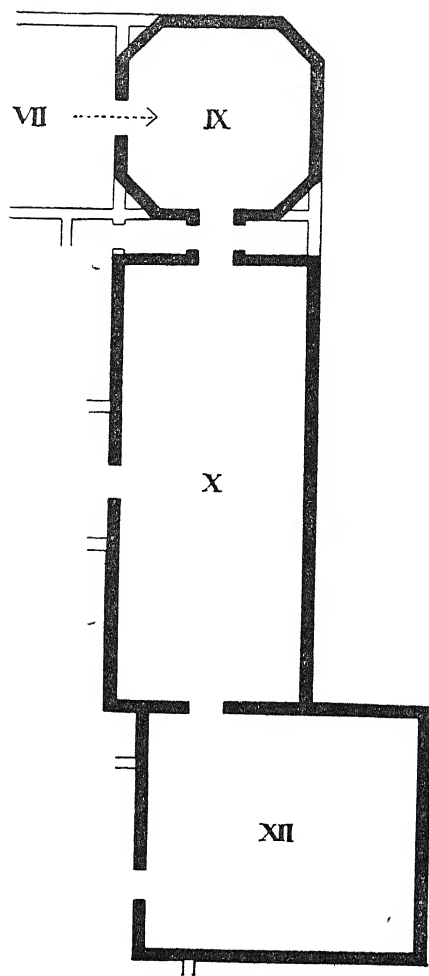
ITALIAN SCHOOLS

The art of the eighteenth-century landscape painter **CANALETTO (1697-1768)** is represented in this room by the famous **View in Venice** (No. 127), in which the artist has forsaken the more familiar views of the City of Lagoons and has given us a glimpse of a hardly less romantic stone-mason's yard.

DUTCH SCHOOL

ROOMS IX-XII¹

¹ *It is possible that considerable alterations will be made in the hanging of these rooms, but the majority of the pictures mentioned in these pages will remain on exhibition, and those which are not shown can always be seen, on application, in the Reference Section.*



DUTCH SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

WITH the art of Northern Europe we find a complete reversal of Southern ideas and methods and, until we have understood the reasons for this change, we shall not be able to appreciate the significance of the Northern schools of painting. We shall, indeed, be liable to run away with the opinion that the only painting worth critical consideration is that which comes from Italy.

To leave Italy and enter Holland is to pass from morning into afternoon; nor is the chill all imagination, but has a cause which lies deeper than in the mere change of temperature and climate. In Northern Europe the conditions which stimulated the art of painting were completely different from those in the South. In Italy, for example, painting was in its origins almost entirely ecclesiastical and was dedicated to the service of the Church.

In the North, it was the reverse and painting did not arise from the Church but was in the main dependent upon private patronage. The churches in the North, owing to the damp and sunless climate, were not decorated with mural paintings and the only pictures known were those which could be adapted to private uses, both secular and sacred. Moreover, the medium of painting was different in the North from the South. In Italy all the early work was executed in tempera¹ or fresco, but in the humid climate of the North the oil medium was used in preference to any other.

The characteristics of the art produced in Holland during the seventeenth century were crystallized by the

¹ See Introductory Note (iii).

development of social and political conditions. It was, indeed, to a turn of politics that Holland owed her great but retarded artistic efflorescence. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Low Countries were kept in continual oppression under Spain. The iron hand of the Inquisition had the Netherlands firmly in its grip and forced both Holland and Belgium to profess the Roman Catholic Faith. With the advent of the seventeenth century all began to change. The truce of 1608 finally removed the Spanish yoke and Holland, freeing herself from the shackles of an imposed Catholicism, became an important power in Europe. She was suddenly invested with great wealth and she found herself the pivot of European commerce. Being a small country and self-contained Holland was in a fortunate position. Her methods of agriculture and market gardening were without rival; her navy was famous and she enjoyed a monopoly of trade with Eastern India and China. The militarism which, shortly before, had been the sole pre-occupation of the well-to-do gave place to a life of leisure and the richer classes felt a desire for art with which to exploit their riches.

The aura of domesticity which pervades Dutch painting—and which is the principal cause of its popularity—was determined by influences of character and climate. The artists of Holland did not paint for an intellectual aristocracy such as there had been in Florence, and Amsterdam contained no family of Medici to stimulate an art in which a scientific intellectualism was the predominating feature. The artistic patrons in Holland were a group of wealthy burghers who demanded from art nothing more than a representation of the scenes and incidents of everyday life. The limitations of their

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artistic vision are painfully set to proof by the fact that Rembrandt, the greatest of all Dutch painters and one of the few who was not confined to the representation of commonplace objects, died in utter poverty and oblivion.

Art in Holland was supported by the middle classes. Many of the Dutch bourgeoisie, suddenly possessed of leisure, deserted the towns to live in country houses, where a new range of interests was revealed to them. They became, for the first time, acquainted with the pleasures of country life and they naturally demanded, in their art, a reflection of country pursuits. It is not, therefore, surprising that landscape painting became popular in the seventeenth century and remained an important feature of Dutch art.

The development of painting in Holland was largely affected by the climate. Owing to the dark days of the Northern winter the houses (even those of the rich) were dismal and ill-lighted and pictures, to be ornamental, had to be bright in tone. Owing, moreover, to the bad state of the roads and to difficulties of locomotion much time was spent in the house and it was essential that all interior adornments should be brilliant and cheerful.

The depressing effect of the weather made the people of Holland peculiarly sensitive to warmth and colour and they soon discovered that what they lost in their climatic conditions they could make up in the pictures on their walls. A pleasant landscape in a dark room can be a tasteful substitute for a view through a window and a painted representation of a homely scene may suggest a glimpse into some other room where there is conversation and pleasant company.

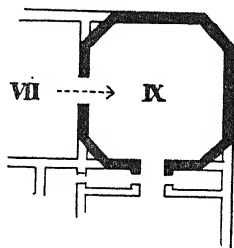
Thus it came about that the dominant characteristics of Dutch pictures are their homeliness and technical

DUTCH SCHOOL

precision. The Dutch artists excelled in brilliance of execution and, for them, no detail was too trivial to be portrayed in paint with the utmost delicacy and minuteness. The painters of Holland, indeed, attained a technical achievement which has never been surpassed and they could endow even the most commonplace objects with an air of dignity and stateliness.

The majority of Dutch paintings represent trivial scenes of everyday life and the 'conversation piece' or 'cabinet picture' is the epitome of the School. Such highly imaginative conceptions as those to which the Italians soared were almost unknown among the Dutch and representations of the 'Madonna and Child' were as uncommon in Amsterdam as they were usual in Florence.¹ A picture, to be popular in Holland, could reveal no phase of religion nor mythology but must portray such domestic incidents as a game of cards, a guitar lesson, a lady at her toilet, or a servant bringing in the soup.

ROOM IX



This is one of the least satisfactory rooms in the National Gallery and, owing to the inadequacy of the

¹ Rembrandt painted many religious pictures, but he must always be counted as an exception in Dutch art. It was indeed to his unusual methods that he owed his unpopularity.

ROOM IX

lighting, no picture in it can be seen to its best advantage. For this reason, the room is filled with lesser pictures of the Dutch School and few paintings of first-class importance are hung there.

Nevertheless, the pictures in Room IX are not uninteresting and some popular favourites can be found amongst them.

The Poulterer's Shop (No. 825) by GERARD DOU (1613-1675) is, above all, a riot of detail. Every small item is observed by the artist with a scrupulous precision and one feels that Gerard Dou has used his picture as a vehicle by which to represent a crowd of minute objects. The observation is, therefore, hyper-refined and the effect of the picture is as devoid of significant expression as a letter in which every word is underlined. The technique is a marvel of accuracy, but the fault is one of over-emphasis where little emphasis is needed.

The Repose in Egypt (No. 3909) by ADRIAEN VAN DER WERFF (1659-1722) seems a complete contradiction to the preliminary remarks on the Dutch School. The portrayal of religious subjects is very rare in Dutch painting (except with Rembrandt) and such a subject as the Madonna and Child is only accountable in this picture by the lateness of its date. Van der Werff lived on the fringe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the influence of the Italian masters was beginning to permeate into Holland. We cannot, then, be entirely surprised that the artist should have chosen this subject for his picture.

The fault of too high a polish might be attributed to this painting, but in no way is it guilty of the offence of monotony as is Gerard Dou. The colours are sensi-

tively applied and their enamel-like brilliance is so charming as to disarm criticism. The picture is embellished with a wealth of delicious detail and such passages as the sun-caught tree, the growing ferns and the wild-rose petals are the result of an almost superhuman accomplishment.

Another popular picture in this rather despised room is the **Interior of an Art Gallery** (No. 1287) by **HANS JORDAENS** (1595?-1643). Again we have an example of technical excellence but the effect does not strike very deep and the expression, like that of many other Dutch pictures of the second class, is over-emphatic. The elegance of the painting is beyond praise but the artistry is less considerable.

Room IX also contains some lovely flower pictures and it seems a pity that things of such exquisite delicacy and comeliness should not receive a better place in our gallery. Nevertheless, from the point of view of æsthetic criticism, their qualities do not far exceed the confines of good colour photographs and the pictures cannot therefore be counted as works of the highest æsthetic importance.

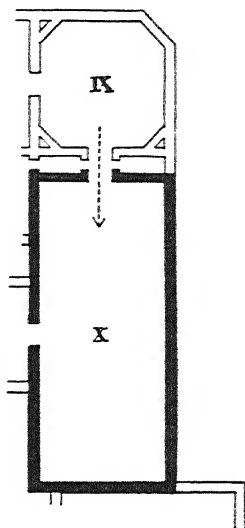
But flower pieces are always charming and the finest in this room are the **Flower-piece** (No. 3225) by **VAN BRUSSEL** (1754-1795); **Flowers, Insects and Strawberries** (No. 1002) by **JACOB WALSCAPPELLE** (op. 1667-1717); and the famous **Vase with Flowers** (No. 796) by **JAN VAN HUYSUM** (1682-1749).

This room also contains many small and attractive pictures comprising interesting examples of such well-known artists as Cuyp, De Hooch, Ruisdael, Hobbema, and Van de Velde. All these artists, however, are so magnificently represented in the other Dutch Rooms

ROOM X

that only the possession of much time and the anticipation of easy opportunity for further visits will justify a lengthy stay in this small room.

ROOM X



This long gallery continues the National Collection of Dutch pictures and almost every facet of the School is represented here. Owing to the frequent alterations to which this room is prone, it is best to classify the pictures according to their subject and not in the present order of hanging.

(i) LANDSCAPE

The dominating figure of Dutch landscape as represented in Room X is AELBERT CUYP (1620-1691).

Cuyp's wide popularity is well exploited in Trafalgar Square since the National Gallery possesses one of the finest extant collections of the works of this prolific painter. Cuyp was a master in his own sphere and, if we find him monotonous, it is because we allow his repetition of subject and treatment to blind us to his romantic vision and his technical excellence.

The **Evening Landscape** (No. 822) is a sensitive representation of natural phenomena. The golden glow which floods the sky and the darkening shadows of the trees and figures could not be more felicitously portrayed. The design is mathematically correct and the composition is based upon a sharp diagonal which completely dissects the picture. It is, perhaps, to this academic pattern that the work owes its slightly theatrical effect.

The **Large Dort** (No. 961) includes a view of the artist's native town of Dordrecht. The scene is bathed in a golden light and in the suggestion of oppressive heat the artist reveals an advanced attempt at naturalism. The picture is an example of the kind of landscape painting in demand at the time and the milkmaid at her work and the child holding the dog must have served as pleasant reminders for Holland's art patrons of the charms of a country life which they now had the leisure to enjoy.

Cuyp will always hold his place as one of the most accomplished masters of Dutch landscape. No painter could excel him in the suggestion of light and atmosphere and few Dutch artists could rival his romantic conception of Nature. The scenery of Holland does not usually stimulate romance and it is strange that Cuyp, so truly Dutch in many respects, should have conceived

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his land as a fantastic realm in which it is always a golden afternoon.

The Canal Scene (No. 732) by AART VAN DER NEER (1603-1677) surprises us by its unexpected excellence. This painter is usually associated with the portrayal of rather sentimental scenes, but in this picture he has turned his triviality into a noble romanticism. The effect of the moonlight upon the water is portrayed with a sensibility which almost suggests our own Richard Wilson.

In criticizing the work of Van der Neer, one is tempted to assess it as monotonous and repetitive, but it is well to remember that his life was one of extreme poverty and that force of circumstances may have compelled him to prostitute his style to the demands of an uncultured section of the public.

PHILIPS KONINCK (1619-1688) is a more unusual landscape painter than many of his contemporaries, since it was his especial pleasure to represent a panoramic expanse rather than some specified section of the country-side. The artist achieved a fine success in this most difficult field of painting since he could combine an observation of detail with a sense of vast extents and distances. His pictures, in spite of their large range of vision, possess a perfect unity and have nothing in common with that most confusing of modern pictorial achievements—the aerial photograph.

The Landscape. View of Holland (No. 836) is an excellent illustration of Koninck's mastery of ordered panorama.

The greatest of Dutch landscape painters, Meindert Hobbema and Jacob Ruysdael, are better represented in the next Room (No. XII). Room X, however, con-

tains one supreme example of the work of **JACOB VAN RUISDAEL (1628/29-1682)** in the **Shore at Scheveningen** (No. 1390). In this picture the correlation between the sea and the clouds is an achievement of fine artistic sensibility. The sweeping lines of the rising tide are perfectly echoed by the curves of the clouds above. The picture affords a pleasing contrast to the present state of Scheveningen and anyone who has visited The Hague's maritime suburb will regret the transformation of this deserted shore into a fashionable beach adorned with basket chairs and bordered by a row of pretentious public buildings.

The Dutch painters were masters of architectural landscape and no one could depict a street-scene more perfectly than they. Such small open-air pieces are numerous in the National Gallery, and one could select from them no better example than the **View of Haarlem** (No. 1420) by **GERRIT BERCKHEYDE (1638-1698)**. The picture represents the central square in Haarlem and we are looking at the Cathedral of Saint Bavo from the arcade of the Town Hall in which Frans Hals' famous pictures of the Civic Guards (now in the Haarlem Museum) used to hang. Berckheyde's picture is an exercise in effects of light and the contrast of sharp lights with dark shadows anticipates the methods of many modern artists.

This artist was also an excellent exponent of interior scenes, a quality to which his **Interior of St. Bavo, Haarlem** (No. 1451) will well bear witness.

Seeing that the Northern Winter played such an important part in the development of Dutch art, it is strange that more representations of it do not appear in paint. Among the few Dutch painters associated with

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the portrayal of winter scenes was **HENDRIK AVERCAMP** (1585–after 1663). Although he was a deaf mute, Avercamp did not allow his physical disabilities to swamp his sense of humour and his **Winter Scene** (No. 1346) is a most diverting work. Skating was and still is a characteristic feature of Dutch life and Holland in the winter even now bears a close resemblance to an Avercamp picture. Many of the Dutch, when on the ice, still wear their national costume and they still use the long curved blades which cause them to skate with the broad rolling movement as portrayed in this picture. Avercamp was an ardent admirer of Pieter Brueghel and the influence of the Flemish master finds an indisputable reflection in this winter scene.

(ii) **GENRE PAINTING**

The Dutchman of the seventeenth century found no pictures so pleasing as those which represented the incidents from everyday life. He felt that by looking at such pictures he was translated from the humdrum confines of his own house to a more pleasant world in which the scene was new and the society was gay. These 'Genre pictures' retained their popular appeal throughout the whole era of Dutch painting and the same subjects were continually repeated. People never tired of looking at pleasant scenes of company and conversation and they were content to return again and again to their pictures, as lovers of reading will return to the characters in their favourite books.

The 'genre painting' in Holland was of two kinds: the 'polite genre' and the 'peasant genre'. The portrayal of tavern scenes and incidents of low life (peasant genre) was the first form to become popular and it was not

until after the hysterical reaction of the Spanish domination had died down that people could concentrate their attention upon the doings of polite society.

The king of painters in the 'peasant genre' was **ADRIAEN BROUWER (1605-1638)** and it is unfortunate that the National Gallery possesses only one example of his art.¹ The **Three Boers Drinking**² (No. 2569) is not an exciting picture and gives no adequate idea of the artist's genius for broken colours and deliberate design.

Little is known of Brouwer's life; it seems to have been as squalid as the subjects of his pictures and we are told that he died an early death of drink and dissipation and that his body was thrown into a well. His paintings all represent scenes of low life and among them are one or two examples of tobacco smoking which, owing to the strength of the tobacco, was considered as a vice at the time and was practised only by vagabonds and coarse persons.

TENIERS THE YOUNGER (1610-1690), for all his prolific production, is not often an interesting painter, but his picture of the **Music Party** (No. 154) is an illuminating example of the peasant genre. There is a breadth and vitality about this picture which almost equals Brouwer and the old lute-player seems to twang his string with a diabolical vehemence.

JAN STEEN (1626-1679), a far more important artist than Teniers, is not worthily represented in the National Gallery. The 1929 exhibition of Dutch Pictures at Burlington House proved to us that Steen was capable

¹ Our finest example, **The Tavern Scene** (in Room XII), is only on loan to the Gallery. There is an excellent Brouwer at the Wallace Collection.

² In Room IX.

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of producing works far grander than anything which we possess. Steen did not confine himself to scenes of low life but passed with ease from peasantry to politeness. Our **Skittle Players** (No. 2560) marks a transitional stage between the two moods. This picture has a subtle suggestion of sun and light and reveals a feeling for landscape which we do not usually associate with this artist. The feathery trees, moreover, suggest the influence of Paul Potter.

Steen was a man of convivial disposition and his facile habits were in accordance with the then loose profession of keeper of a public-house.

(iii) PORTRAIT GROUPS

The east wall of Room X is dominated by two large portrait-groups of which the most interesting is the **Family Group** (No. 1699), by **MICHAEL SWEERTZ** (1615/20-1656?). This picture has had a curious history. The left half representing the Man and Boy was presented to the National Gallery in 1900 under the title of 'The Lesson' and was fantastically supposed to be an early work of Vermeer of Delft. The right half of the picture was discovered in Paris in 1910 and was joined to its complement in the National Gallery. The whole was then attributed to Michael Sweertz.

This picture, the product of a comparatively unknown artist, is a far more impressive work than the **Family Group** (No. 2285) by the famous **FRANS HALS** (1580/81-1666). This painting is almost a curiosity in bad construction and it is strange that such a clumsy design and coarse technique should come from the hand which painted the 'Laughing Cavalier.'¹

¹ Wallace Collection.

(iv) PORTRAITS

Fortunately, Frans Hals is better represented in the Gallery than by the 'Family Group', and with the **Portrait of a Man** (No. 1251) he regains his position as a master of swaggering portraiture. The painting suggests an extraordinary rapidity of execution and it would seem that the man had only just entered the studio and had swept off his hat to prepare for an immediate sitting. This suggestion, in fact, is not so imaginative as it sounds since the ridge made by the hat across the forehead is still visible. The picture is painted in broad tones, the half tones being put in first and the high lights added later. This method requires much accuracy and is a testimonial to the artist's sureness of hand, since the least slip of draughtsmanship would have meant a fatal injury to the picture.

The **Portrait of a Woman** (No. 1021) shows less of the virtuoso and, for this reason, it is less characteristic of the painter. It is a more scrupulous work than the male portrait and possesses a crispness which the other picture lacks.

Frans Hals now holds such an assured position in the history of Dutch painting that it is difficult to realize that his talents are of comparatively recent recognition. He was not a successful painter. He developed late and had a short-lived prosperity and he died in the workhouse. For two hundred years Frans Hals was forgotten and he was not represented in the National Gallery until 1856, when the **Portrait of a Woman** (mentioned above) was purchased for a hundred guineas.

Even the most considerable of Dutch artists must

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take a secondary place beside the great and universal genius of REMBRANDT VAN RYN (1606-1669). Rembrandt's fame was posthumous and his popularity among his contemporaries was not long of life. But it is not difficult to imagine the reasons for this shortlived success. In an age when artistic demand would accept nothing but brilliant cabinet pictures, the dim masterpieces of Rembrandt had little chance of winning popular esteem. The middle class patrons of art in seventeenth-century Holland considered his pictures as muddy in colouring and monotonous in tone and they felt that such misty paintings could never be adapted to the ordinary requirements of everyday life. Very few of Rembrandt's pictures would contribute to the brightness of a small room and the majority of his works, being very large and dark, would require a spacious house and a strong light to show them to their best advantage.

Rembrandt, moreover, was one of the few Dutch artists to venture beyond the bounds of domesticity and the humdrum. He was concerned with the mystery and infinity of life and such petty incidents as delighted his contemporaries completely passed him by.

In his early years Rembrandt enjoyed a fine prosperity, but after 1640 and the painting of the Night Watch his popularity dwindled and in the end he was left devoid of clients. In 1656 he was declared bankrupt and he died, thirteen years later, in the extremes of poverty, befriended only by the faithful Burgomaster Six and his former housekeeper Hendrickje Stoffels.

The very qualities in Rembrandt which his contemporaries despised are those which, for us, denote his force and fascination. Rembrandt was not concerned

with bright colours and his palette consisted mainly of golden browns and rich reds. He saw everything in a mysterious twilight and he seemed to withdraw instinctively from the brilliance of cheerful day. Many suggestions have been promoted for the reason of Rembrandt's feeling for half-lights. Some have said that his first studio, being a corner of his father's mill, would account for his dim lighting; others have considered, with greater reason, that Rembrandt encouraged an economy of colour to lengthen his working hours and to make himself independent of the dark winter days. With his almost monochrome palette, daylight was not essential to Rembrandt and he could paint on sunless days and even at night.

The main reason, however, for his preference for dark colouring was psychological rather than practical, and Rembrandt knew well that these dark rich pigments possessed qualities of atmosphere which were especially suitable for the subjects he wished to portray and for the philosophical mysteries which he wished to sound.

The tragedy of Rembrandt's life is reflected for us in the two self-portraits which hang in this room. The early **Portrait of Himself** (No. 672) shows us the artist as a young man of thirty-four years of age. He was then at the zenith of his career; his studio was magnificently appointed and was the meeting-place of the richest and most elegant society of Amsterdam.

Rembrandt was, himself, a collector and his house was adorned with fine pictures and costly Oriental carpets. He and his wife Saskia led a life of extravagant luxury: they were always clothed in splendid stuffs and possessed much valuable jewellery.

Unlike so many of his contemporaries, Rembrandt's

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consideration was not confined to Holland and he made a study of the Florentine and Venetian masters. This early picture of himself reflects the knowledge of Raphael's portrait of Baldassare Castiglione (now in the Louvre) and of our own 'Ariosto' (?) by Titian.

The second **Portrait of Himself** (No. 221) reveals a complete change. Here we see the master as an old man, battered almost beyond recognition by the storms of life. His clothes are shabby and instead of the velvet hat of his prime a dirty cap is on his head. Rembrandt is now a bankrupt; all his possessions have been disposed of and his magnificent clothes have been sold or are in pawn. His wife, Saskia, is dead and her place is being filled by Stoffels, the artist's former servant. Even amongst these sorrows, Rembrandt's confidence has not left him and the picture expresses an awful aloofness and a colossal grandeur. His eyes are old and bloodshot, but they look at us, still, with a furious defiance and a towering contempt. In these last years, Rembrandt reached the climax of his achievement and his contemporaries, by refusing to accept his later work, were rejecting his masterpieces. This last self-portrait of Rembrandt is not merely the portrayal of a disillusioned old man but expresses the whole significance of human sorrow. It is, indeed, one of the most tragic psychological revelations in the history of European painting.

(v) RELIGIOUS PICTURES

Rembrandt was not the only Dutch artist of the century to draw inspiration from Italy and a small group of painters were aiming at the introduction of Italian methods into Holland. Chief of this Italianate group was Rembrandt's predecessor, GERARD VAN

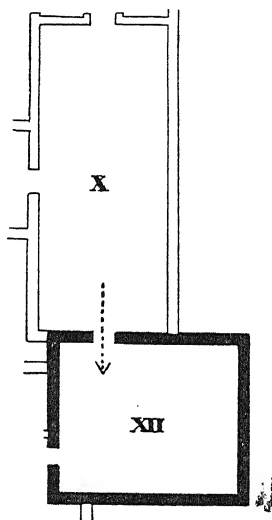
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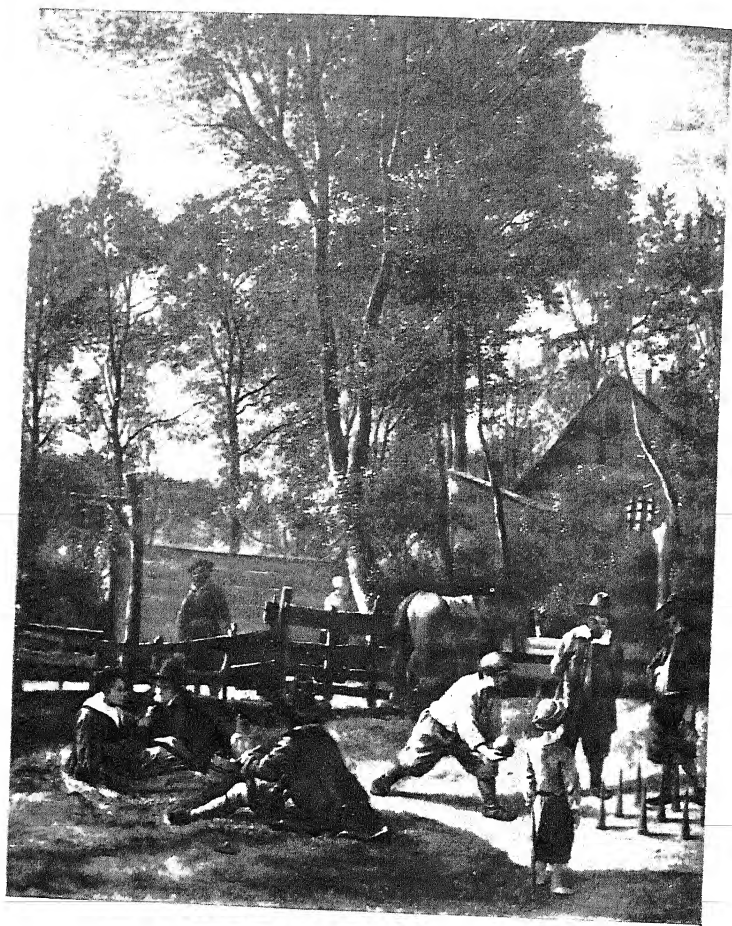
HONTHORST (1590-1656), whose **CHRIST BEFORE PILATE** (No. 3679) draws many people to this room.

The picture, inspired by Caravaggio, is an effective work and we may well marvel at the artist's technical audacity in making the entire light of this large picture radiate from the flame of one small candle. Nevertheless the picture is too large to support such an empty design and beside a masterpiece of Rembrandt its realism ceases to be thrilling and becomes theatrical.

It must be remembered, however, that in this picture Honthorst was ahead of his time. He was working in a style which we now associate with Rembrandt at a period when that master was still a child. Honthorst's technical achievement is, therefore, impressive if only for its anticipation of coming events.

ROOM XII





ROOM X

JAN STEEN : The Skittle Players

[No. 2560]

ROOM XII

This room, the last of those devoted to the School of Holland, contains some of the pearls of our collection of Dutch pictures. Here, as in the preceding room, alteration is by no means unknown and it is better to group the pictures according to subject rather than in their present order of hanging.

(i) LANDSCAPE

After our studies in Room X of the art of Cuyp and Ruisdael we might suppose that landscape painting in Holland was definitely romantic in character. It is therefore fortunate that, in this room (XII), our minds can be set right by some famous examples of the naturalistic school.

JAN VAN GOYEN (1596-1656), being essentially Dutch in character, was little of a romantic. Among the numerous examples which the National Gallery possesses of this prolific painter the finest is the *Winter Scene* (No. 1327). This picture impresses us with its harmonious colouring and spirited action, but for those who have already admired Avercamp's version of a similar subject, it will come as a disappointment. Van Goyen is an accomplished draughtsman, but in this picture he has failed to instil humour into a scene to which humour is essential.

The culminating point in Dutch naturalistic landscape was reached by MEINDERT HOBBEEMA (1638-1709) in his *Avenue at Middelharnis* (No. 830). Much of Hobbema's work is dull and he is often associated with a pernickety form of landscape painting in which every leaf is picked out with a fastidious precision. In the 'Avenue' we see the artist at his best; it was, indeed, the pinnacle of his achievement and he never rose to such a height again.

The picture reflects a curious history. Hobbema was never a successful artist and he was unable to find a sale for his pictures. After his marriage in 1668 and his acceptance of a comfortable post at the local customs, he completely forsook his art and the only picture painted after the date of his wedding was his masterpiece, the 'Avenue'. This fact alone proves that in Hobbema we have a supreme example of one who knew how to rest upon his laurels.

The scene of Hobbema's picture is typical of the Dutch country-side with its wide open plains and mop-like trees. The composition is of a geometrical formality. The trees are so placed that, from whatever point the spectator looks at the picture, the avenue is directly in front of him, and no matter whether we are on the extreme right or the extreme left we can follow the avenue from its nearest point to the village at which it ends. This phenomenon of perspective is not unique and there are many examples of portraits in which the eyes follow one round the room.¹

Hobbema has left nothing to the imagination and the smallest details, even down to the ruts in the road and the damp on the houses, are minutely observed. The dyke, the tilled field and the orchard in which a man is pruning his trees are all finished with accuracy and judgment.

With the famous **View near Haarlem** (No. 2561), by **JACOB VAN RUISDAEL** (1628/29-1682), we revert from naturalism to the sphere of imagination. The dramatic contrasts of light and shade, the ruins by the

¹ The pistol painted as an advertisement for the rifle manufacturers in Pall Mall (opposite Marlborough House) is designed on the same principle.

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lake and the buildings silhouetted against the sky are all intended to stimulate the romantic mood.

The highest point in romantic landscape was attained by **HERCULES SEGERS** (c. 1590–c. 1640), whose **Mountain Landscape** (No. 4383) is among the most felicitous of the Gallery's recent acquisitions.

Segers was a pioneer in a new field of painting and he surprised his countrymen by venturing beyond the regions of Holland to explore the wild mountain scenery of Northern Italy. Our picture is the epitome of Seger's art and we need not wonder that the placid denizens of Holland were bewildered by the vagaries of this strange poetic dreamer.

Hercules Segers practised a curious method of technique and he painted in exceptionally thin pigments. In our picture the grain of the wood can be seen beneath the painting of the sky, and this effect, although accentuated by the passage of time, was intended by the artist to introduce an extra dramatic vitality into this already imaginative mountain scene.

Every gallery, large or small, is so generously supplied with the paintings of **PHILIPS WOUWERMAN** (1619–1668) that it is easy to pass his pictures by as a matter of course. Nevertheless, the best examples of the art of most painters are worth critical consideration, and our **On the Sea Shore** (No. 880) is one of the most perfectly poised compositions that Wouwerman has conceived. The subject is familiar and the favourite white horse has again a prominent place but the design is fresh and satisfying.

This room contains many small architectural landscapes of considerable interest, but all are unimportant when compared with the precious **View in Delft** (No.

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3714) by CAREL FABRITIUS (1624-1654). This picture presents an Oriental atmosphere which is not mere caprice but may well have been inspired by some work of Chinese porcelain. At the time when the picture was painted, the pottery of Delft was losing its national character and assuming that of the Oriental porcelain imported into Holland from Dutch East India. It was not, then, unlikely that Fabritius, living at Delft when the fashion for things Chinese was at its height, should have allowed this taste to enter into his painting.

There is, indeed, a strain of *chinoiserie* running all through Dutch art for which this craze for Oriental porcelain may well have been responsible.

Carel Fabritius is one of the rarest and most choice of painters. He spent his short life at Delft where he died, at the age of thirty, in the great explosion of 1654. His untimely death was an irreparable loss to the art of Holland, but the blank did not long remain unfilled for his spirit rose again, fresh and unimpaired, in the person of his pupil Vermeer.

The National Gallery possesses a record of the catastrophe of 1654 in the **View of Delft after the Explosion** (No. 1061) by EGBERT VAN DER POËL (1621-1664) which hangs near Fabritius' picture.

(ii) SEASCAPE

Landscape artists had serious rivals for their popularity in the numerous painters of marine subjects. The National Gallery possesses many fine pictures by such well-known masters of seascape as Bakhuizen, Cappelle, and Van de Velde. The recent Revelstoke Bequest includes among its treasures a splendid **Calm** at

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Sea by JAN VAN DE CAPPELLE (1624–1679). The tranquil beauty of this picture is apparent to the most unenlightened observers and no verbal description is necessary.

(iii) GENRE PAINTING

The average Dutchman's conception of painting was based upon the ideal of the open door or window and he demanded nothing more from a picture than that it should transmit to him the sensation of looking at some pleasant landscape or at some neat interior.

The unique and famous Peepshow (No. 3832) by SAMUEL VAN HOOGSTRAATEN (1627–1678) is the quintessence of Dutch taste and the epitome of scientific realism as applied to a domestic form of art.

The Dutch painters delighted in visual illusion and their technical method was as accurately realistic as painting is possible to be. Van Hoogstraaten's conception of art differed not at all from that of his contemporaries, but he possessed the additional quality of an advanced mathematical genius which enabled him to overstep the bounds of conventional realism and to turn his 'Interior of a Dutch House' from a picture into a peepshow.

The 'Peepshow' is magician's work. It is painted on five sides of an empty rectangular box and the illusion is given entirely by reflected light. The 'Peepshow' represents a Dutch interior in which one room opens upon another. It contains every sort of amusing detail. Through the peephole nearest to Room X we can detect an old woman lying in bed whilst the shadow of a man—perhaps the owner of the house—is seen behind a glass door. In the foreground, a broom is propped

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against the wall. Through the hole on the other side we enjoy a different vista. We look into the hall of the house where the householder's coats and his sword hang upon a peg and a little dog sits on the floor. On the walls are views of Amsterdam and through the window of frosted glass we have a glimpse into the garden.

Hoogstraaten's achievement is one of mathematics rather than of art and by his geometrical ingenuity he has transformed a cabinet picture into a scientific toy. Nevertheless, the connection with art is not entirely severed and, in the Peepshow, Van Hoogstraaten has realized the ideal of the open door or window to a degree which has never been surpassed. And this ideal is, surely, the criterion upon which all Dutch cabinet pictures should be judged.

With GERARD TERBORCH (1617-1681) we become acquainted with Holland's most polite society. Being of a more distinguished parentage than that of many of his fellow-artists, Terborch mixed with the highest society of his time and the most refined ladies and gentlemen of Holland thought fit to give him commissions. He took not the slightest interest in the peasant life and there is scarcely a picture from his hand which is not essentially genteel.

It is not difficult to see why Terborch's cabinet pictures were popular among his clients since they are perfect representations of the doings of delicate people and are painted with a refinement which amounts at times to alembication. Terborch displayed an excellent taste in design and he possessed a minuteness of workmanship which has never been excelled. It was his especial pleasure to paint exquisite materials and no

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one was his rival in catching the sheen upon a satin dress. This fascination for silken stuffs was apt to absorb any desire for characterization and we sometimes feel that Terborch painted a lady only for the beauty of her clothes. We know, indeed, that he did not always trouble to paint the lady at all but used a dummy figure as his model.

The Guitar Lesson (No. 864) is an admirable example of Terborch's æsthetic achievement. The design is finely ordered; the outstretched hand of the music master as he times the beat forms the pivot of the composition and the group of figures fit compactly into a diamond-shaped mass. The eye is carried from the hat of the standing gentleman to the bottom edge of the lady's tunic and then is drawn downwards to the card on the floor which is specially placed so as to carry the eye to the lower edge of the rich Turkey carpet which they are using as a tablecloth.

The only element which destroys this compositional harmony is the background which seems too near the figures; the room, indeed, is uninterestingly designed and seems too small comfortably to contain the group.

The company is essentially polite and the fact that the gentlemen wear their hats does not denote any lack of manners since it was not then the custom always to remove one's hat in the house or in the presence of ladies.

This picture gives Terborch an opportunity of portraying a glistening satin and he has lavished his technical achievement upon the lady's lemon-coloured garment. The details in the picture are minutely observed and even the light caught by the silver box on the table is given its due importance. A King Charles

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spaniel (with the long nose and not as they are now being bred) stands behind the lady who has her foot upon an iron footwarmer.

Such footwarmers were essential in a Dutch house and exactly the same pattern is used to-day in the churches of Holland which, during the winter months, are cold beyond enduring.

The Peace of Munster (No. 896) displays a different facet of Terborch's accomplishment for it can hardly be counted as a genre picture but is nearer a portrait group on a miniature scale.

It is curious that Terborch so often sacrificed psychological interest for technical erudition since, when he pleased, he could make a searching study of human character. In this picture, every face is well defined and is a portrait in miniature. The picture should be closely examined and a magnifying glass is necessary to bring out the details such as the intricate ornamentation of the oak-panelled room which is lit by a central chandelier which supports a statue of the Virgin.

The scene represents the ratification of peace between the Dutch United Provinces and Philip IV of Spain, a solemn and epoch-making event in the history of Holland. All the figures of the assembly have been identified. In the centre, with their right hands on the Gospels, are the two plenipotentiaries of the King of Spain and, still further to the right, is the sinister figure of the Abbé Scaglia whose portrait by Van Dyck was one of the treasures of the Dorchester House Collection.

Terborch, when he wished, could be a master of refined portraiture as we can see in the well-known **Portrait of a Gentleman** (No. 1399), but even in this picture the honours are shared between the stress

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upon the gentleman's character and the sumptuousity of his apparel.

The name of Terborch is usually coupled with that of GABRIEL METSU (1630-1667). This very accomplished artist is well represented in our Gallery. Metsu could paint almost as soon as he could walk and at the age of fourteen he was well known as an artist of extraordinary talent. Of our examples of Metsu's work the finest is *The Duet* (838). All that was said about Terborch's 'The Guitar Lesson' can be repeated in connection with this picture, but of the two works Metsu's is, by far, the more subtle in design. The figures are grouped in a similar manner to that used by Terborch, but the background does not force itself upon them and there is an admirable suggestion of light and space. The artist has shown wisdom in the placing of every detail and even the ornaments in the room are so arranged as to form a counter-pattern with the main lines of the picture. The colour scheme is no less well composed and the orange of the lady's skirt is echoed by light brown of the man's violin and the scarlet of her tunic finds its complement in the colours of the Turkey rug.

These representations of ladies at their music were popular among the Dutch. In the National Gallery we have, among many other examples, the well-known *The Music Master* (No. 856), by JAN STEEN (1626-1679). The latter painter is usually associated with the peasant genre and we have already discussed his picture of the 'Skittle Players.' Here we see him in a more elegant mood and, even if we do not consider the picture to equal Metsu's standard, we cannot but delight in the delicacy of the painting and in the humorous representation of the plain young lady

DUTCH SCHOOL

anxiously trying to extract the fullest benefit from her hour at the harpsichord.

Of our many glimpses into the homes of Holland, none can be more satisfying than that given us by **PIETER DE HOOCH (1629-1683)** in his **Interior of a Dutch House (No. 834)**. Here we may really be deluded into thinking that someone has opened a door into another room where we can share the pleasure of some merry company. The picture portrays no particular incident. Three people are gathered round a table in a large sunny apartment. The lady holds a glass up to the light while one gentleman admires the sun sparkling in the golden wine and another is happily playing upon his pipe. A servant comes dreamily across the room carrying a bowl of burning peat or charcoal from which the men will light their pipes.

The picture reveals a mastery of daylight effects. The room pulsates with light and the sun is playing not only in the glass but on the wall and pavement. But the effect is not so brilliant as to be dazzling since a sombre counter-pattern to the sunlight is given by the dark rafters of the ceiling and the tiles of the tessellated floor.

The pigment with which the picture is painted is unusually thin. The passage of time has caused the maid's skirt and the legs of the table in the left foreground to become completely transparent and the figure of a man in a large hat, previously erased by the artist, can now be plainly seen in front of the fireplace.

With the **Courtyard of a Dutch House (No. 835)** we see De Hooch's genius applied to the painting of an outside scene. This picture is a marvel of geometrical design and scientific harmony of colour. The clearly-

ROOM XII

defined brickwork, giving an effect of continual perpendiculars and horizontals, is set off by the curious Z-shaped effect which the trellis forms with the broom. This mathematical excellence is echoed in the colour scheme which is an alternating pattern of red and white.

De Hooch's picture is a masterpiece in atmospheric effect and the artist suggests most delicately the contrast between the cool courtyard and the sunny street beyond. Those who seek a story in every picture will tell us that the lady silhouetted in the doorway is watching for her husband's return and that the maid is bringing the little girl to join her mother in the vigil. But, in reality, the figures have little intrinsic importance and serve merely to intensify the artist's conception of colour and light.

The name of Pieter de Hooch is for the moment overshadowed by that of the most fashionable of Dutch artists, VERMEER OF DELFT (1632-1675). Vermeer is, with Rembrandt, the most highly esteemed of all Dutch painters and his reputation is yet young since not more than twenty-five years have passed since his famous 'Head of a Girl' was bought for five pounds. He is among the rarest of artists and there is not a single painting from his hand which does not show the finest workmanship. With Vermeer, indeed, we may consider that the art of the cabinet picture reaches its perfection.

The National Gallery possesses two examples of his work. Our *Lady Seated at the Virginals* (No. 2568) is a disappointment to many and is, without doubt, less brilliant than Vermeer's greatest achievements. The lighting is badly arranged and one wonders why Ver-

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meer, a master of effects of sun and light, should have placed his sitter in a dismal corner in which no light can enter and where the only window is blocked up. Nevertheless, for firmness of draughtsmanship and economy of design this work of Vermeer cannot be excelled by any of the cabinet pictures in this room, unless it be Vermeer's other picture: the 'Lady Standing at the Virginals' (1383).

With the **Lady Standing at the Virginals** (No. 1383) we are on surer ground. Here we have Vermeer as we should know him and there is no lack of light and air. The sun is pouring through the window and floods the room with its rays.

Vermeer has never devised a colour-scheme more subtle than that of this picture. The harmony is one of blue and yellow. As usual, blue is the keynote of the picture and, starting in the chair, it passes into the lady's bodice and up into the small picture in the gilt frame. This main line of colour is supported by touches of blue, visible particularly in the background of the large Cupid, in the painting on the lid of the instrument and in the tiles of the tessellated floor. The secondary 'motif' of yellow is given in the window panes, in the lady's skirt and in the landscape on the Virginals. A third note, of salmon pink, is sounded in the bows on the lady's sleeve and in the ribbons in her hair.

The small picture in the gilt frame which hangs beside the Cupid has met with much adverse criticism. It is, however, the pivot of the design and, without it, the composition becomes at once lop-sided. The large picture of the 'Cupid' is then the principal attraction to the eye and swamps the composition by its heaviness.



ROOM XII

JAN VERMEER OF DELFT:
A Lady Standing at the Virginals

[No. 1383]

ROOM XII

Vermeer's picture is a marvel of scientific measurement. A surveyor could determine the proportions of the smallest details and even the least initiated eye can judge the distance between the lady's head and the large picture on the wall. Only the most sure-handed of draughtsmen could attain such a perfection of tone gradation, and a clumsy painter would have made it appear that the lady's head was glued to this heavy mural adornment.

In its perfect poise of light and colour the picture has a somewhat Oriental effect. This may have been due to a caprice of Vermeer's genius, but, again as in the case of Fabritius, it seems likely that the increasing popularity of Chinese porcelain and its imitation by the potters of Delft were to some degree responsible for the feeling of *chinoiserie* which pervades Dutch cabinet pictures.

The only Dutch master who kept himself aloof from the art of the cabinet picture was REMBRANDT (1606-1669). On the rare occasions when he attempted a work of this kind, his genius transcended his intentions and the conception passed from the domestic into the dramatic.

The *Philosopher* (No. 3214), Rembrandt's nearest approach to a cabinet picture, shows how greatly the master differed from his contemporaries in his æsthetic outlook. There is, in this picture, no display of spick and span detail and the interest lies not in the sage nor in his study but in the sheet of liquid light which Rembrandt has poured upon the panel.

It is in the atmospheric suggestion that the drama lies and we feel as if, in the midst of a storm, the sun has momentarily pierced the clouds and that only a

DUTCH SCHOOL

few seconds will pass before the room is again plunged into impenetrable darkness.

(iv) PORTRAITURE

Rembrandt's young and short-lived pupil **CAREL FABRITIUS (1624-1654)** is represented in our Gallery by portraiture as well as landscape. In the **Man with a Fur Cap** (4042) we see a different facet of the artist's genius from that shown in the little 'View of Delft', and with this portrait we are reminded not of his pupil Vermeer but of his master Rembrandt. At first the connection with Rembrandt is not apparent since Fabritius' picture is as light in tone as his master's work was dim. This difference is, however, superficial since it indicates only a reversal of method, in which Fabritius preferred to place a dark figure against a light ground rather than follow the common practice of setting dark against light.

Anyone who doubts the influence of Rembrandt upon Fabritius will only have to look at the sheen on the armour in 'The Man with a Fur Cap' and he will at once be reminded of the master's methods of obtaining brilliant effects by the application of a thick impasto.

The picture is probably a self-portrait and is dated 1564, the year of the artist's death in the Delft explosion.

With our study of Dutch portraiture as represented in this room we revert again to **REMBRANDT (1606-1669)**. The portrait of **Françoise van Wasserhoven** (No. 775) is an early work and could well rival Frans Hals' in its strength and joviality. Every subtle turn of Rembrandt's brushwork has been used in the painting of the face of his aged sitter. Each wrinkle in her skin is separately portrayed and is indicated not by a



ROOM XII

REMBRANDT VAN RYN: A Woman Bathing

[No. 54]

ROOM XII

straight line but a real furrow. The details are all carefully observed. The woman's muff is suspended from her shoulders by black ribbons and the cap on her head is kept in position by three pins.

Her cap and ruff seem of dazzling whiteness, but this is mostly an illusion of tone. A piece of white paper held up beside the picture will immediately reveal the deception and will illustrate that Rembrandt obtained his effect of brilliance by a delicate gradation of the tones.

This work of Rembrandt's youth may be interestingly compared with the later portrait of *An Old Lady* (No. 1675). Here the atmosphere is completely different and we see Rembrandt in his more characteristic mood of overpowering majesty.

With the early portrait of Françoise van Wasserhoven we had a tender representation of an apple-cheeked old bourgeoisie in her eighty-third year, but in the later picture we see the very different Margaretha Trip, a forbidding, aristocratic old woman whose face, were it not so infinitely sad, would suggest relentless tyranny.

Unfortunately the National Gallery possesses no portrait of Rembrandt's wife Saskia, but in the well-known *Woman Bathing* (No. 54) we see Hendrickje Stoffels, the loyal if uncomely companion of Rembrandt's declining years.

(v) RELIGIOUS PICTURES

With Rembrandt's religious pictures an entirely new element of local colour is introduced into this field of painting, for Rembrandt was the first to attempt an introduction of scenic accuracy into the portrayal of

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devotional subjects and to give the setting an Oriental flavour. This topographical background was not, indeed, always correct, and the more pedantic critics complain that the results of his researches do not suggest the Orient but the substitutes of *posticheurs* and makers of fancy dress.

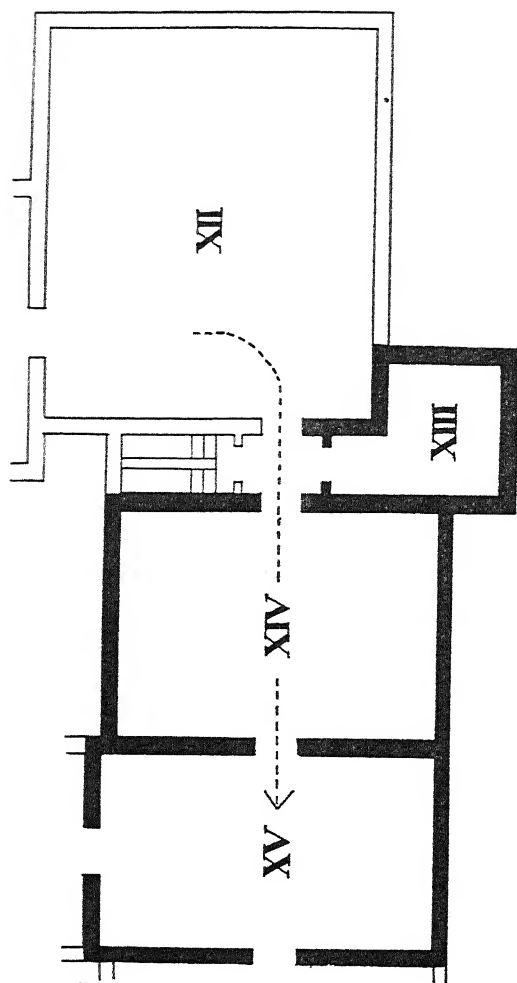
In the **Woman Taken in Adultery** (No. 45) the scene is no homely street in Holland but a huge golden temple which fades away into the invisible, and in **The Adoration of the Shepherds** (No. 47) there is an equally audacious attempt at local colour. The shepherds wear an Eastern dress and, outside the stable, almost buried in the darkness, stands the turbaned messenger of the kings.

These two imaginative conceptions are so far removed from the conventional standards of painting in Holland that we need not wonder that the Dutch public thought them dark and bewildering and returned with relief to their cheerful scenes of the domestic round.

FLEMISH SCHOOL

ROOMS XIII-XV¹

¹ *It is more convenient to go straight to Room XV and to start with the early masters.*



FLEMISH SCHOOL

ROOMS XIII-XV

ROOM XV

COMpletely to enjoy the National Gallery's collection of Flemish pictures one must forgo the numerical sequence of the rooms and pass from Room XII directly to Room XV which is devoted to the works of the early Flemings. We have now to forget the domesticity of seventeenth-century Holland and we must cast our minds back to the Middle Ages and in particular to the second half of the fourteenth century.

Those of us who have followed the works of the Italian masters in their chronological order will remember that it was about this time that the artists in Italy were struggling with the problems of light and perspective and that such men as Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca had not long bewildered the public with their audacious excursions into the realms of science. With the Flemings no such struggle is perceptible, and it seems that the very difficulties which the Italian artists took centuries to solve were mastered instinctively and at once by the painters of Flanders.

Although less laborious in its beginnings, Flemish painting did not flourish so long as did the Italian, and whereas the art of Italy can be considered to have extended from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, painting in Flanders declined half-way through the seventeenth. Facility of hand never deserted the Flemings and until the end they were masters of technical precision, but, except with their greatest painters, imagination was not their dominant characteristic. There-

FLEMISH SCHOOL

fore, for all their brilliance of execution and consummate craftsmanship, their source of creation died and their art, though technically always perfect, relapsed into the ineffectual.

The first great exponents of Flemish painting, the brothers van Eyck, possessed an accuracy of vision which has never been excelled and even in their earliest efforts they seem never to have been hampered by the problems which for so long baffled the Italians. The birth of two such great painters into one family was indeed miraculous, but the mystery of their spontaneous technical perfection has a more logical foundation. The tradition of Flemish painting was such as to encourage a delicacy of handling and accuracy of vision, and inasmuch as the painting in Italy arose from the decoration of large wall spaces in mosaic or fresco, so did that of Flanders arise from the painting of miniatures in religious books.

The van Eyck brothers are popularly credited with the invention of oil painting, but such a medium was not unknown in Northern Europe before their time. Oil painting is mentioned in an artistic treatise by the monk Theophilus who lived in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, and we have further documentary evidence that the medium of oil was known at an early date. The van Eycks, however, perfected the medium and brought it into common use.

Of the elder van Eyck, Hubert, we have no representation in the National Gallery. Examples of his art are of the utmost rarity, and one of his most precious works, *The Hours of Turin*, was burnt in a fire at Turin in 1903. It is, indeed, only at Richmond (in the Cook Collection) and at Ghent (*The Adoration of the Lamb*)



ROOM XV

JAN VAN EYCK: Jan Arnolfini and His Wife

[No. 186]

ROOM XV

that one can estimate the value of this marvellous painter.

The younger brother, **JAN VAN EYCK** (1385?-1441), is represented in our Gallery by three pictures, all of which are great and one of which is a universal masterpiece.

Our **Man in a Red Head-dress** (No. 222) is a deeply significant portrait executed with a jewel-like perfection. Although each detail is most delicately finished, there is no suggestion of pettiness nor over-emphasis and the picture has a broad decorative value. The very texture of the skin is revealed to us with every vein and wrinkle, but, through it all, we can read the character of the man, shrewd, perspicacious and unsympathetic. The picture hangs in its original frame, inscribed with the motto 'ALS ICH KAN'. These words are part of a Flemish proverb meaning 'As I can, not as I will'—a singularly modest device for one whose accomplishment has never been excelled during five centuries of continuous pictorial activity.

The other **Portrait of a Man** (No. 290) is a somewhat less attractive but no less accomplished work. The face is plain and plebeian, but it is executed with a marvellous minuteness and a searching insight into character. The sitter is unknown to us, but, on the parapet below, Van Eyck has inscribed in Greek script the word *ΤΥΜΩΘΕΟΙ* and then, in larger characters, 'LEAL SOUVENIR'. It may be that the man, named Timothy, was a Greek by birth or merely that he was a Humanist, steeped in the knowledge of the dead languages. In any case, he seems to have been a friend of the artist to whom the picture was given as a loyal souvenir.

FLEMISH SCHOOL

At the base of the parapet is an inscription which fixes the date of the picture to October 10th, 1432.

Fully to appreciate Jan van Eyck's technical achievement we must look at the portrait of **Jan Arnolfini and his Wife** (No. 186).

At a time when the Italians conceived perspective only in the terms of elementary geometry, Jan van Eyck produced this work in which the problems of the most advanced science were instinctively understood. His mastery of linear perspective was not the result of an academic training, but was obtained through sheer firmness of hand and accuracy of vision. It is, indeed, this intellectual independence and freedom from any kind of teaching which make Jan van Eyck and his brother Hubert unique phenomena in the history of European painting.

Our picture represents Jan Arnolfini, a wealthy Italian and an agent in Flanders for an Italian trading firm, plighting his troth to his young wife, Jeanne de Chenany. The couple, magnificently clothed in furs and velvets, stand in the luxurious appointed bedroom of their house in Bruges. Every detail of the room is minutely observed. The tester bed is hung with a red cloth canopy of which the side curtains are looped up during the day. On the post at the back of the bed, carved to represent St. Margaret—the patron saint of women in childbirth—hangs a dusting brush of which every bristle is clearly seen. On the floor by the bed is a Turkey rug upon which the lady has left her slippers and at the side of the little griffin terrier, who stands at his mistress's feet, lies a pair of wooden pattens—so minutely painted that the marks of where the feet have been are visible.

ROOM XV

Against the wall at the back of the room is a carved wooden bench covered with a cloth and, above it, hang a glass rosary and a round mirror. The artist has perceived every turn of the light caught by the rosary and has portrayed not only the shadow thrown by the beads but the shadow of the shadow.

The round convex mirror is set in a carved frame adorned with ten enamel medallions depicting scenes from the Passion. Within the convex glass the whole room is reflected in miniature. We can observe therein the couple standing with their backs towards us and through the open doorway of their room we can see the figures of two people of which the one in blue must be the artist himself.

The Arnolfinis' bedroom has one large window of which the top lights are of bottle glass. Through the lower panes we can see the bricks and mortar of the outside wall and also a little cherry tree. The window frame is fitted with wooden shutters and even the grain in the wood and the marks of nails can be clearly seen. On the aumbry below the window are three oranges and a fourth is on the sill. The room is lit by an elaborate brass chandelier in which one candle is still burning. The flame is cocked towards the window owing to the draught from the open door. Below the chandelier is an inscription and date (Jan van Eyck was here, 1434) and this, too, is a masterpiece of capricious extravagance for even the full stop is playfully adorned with an elaborate flourish.

Although the picture is such a maze of bewildering detail, the eye is never distracted from the beauty of the composition and each of the many interests is subordinated to the searching portrait studies of

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FLEMISH SCHOOL

the sour-looking merchant and his timid, expectant wife.

The picture has a curious history. In 1516 it belonged to Marguerite of Austria, Queen Regent of the Netherlands. It came later into the possession of a barber in Bruges who presented it to Mary of Hungary. Rumour says that Mary was so pleased with the gift that she gave the artist an annuity.

In the eighteenth century we hear of the picture in Spain, where it hung in the Royal Palace at Madrid. We then lose sight of it altogether until 1815 when it was discovered by Major-General Hay in a cellar at Brussels to which he was taken when wounded at the battle of Waterloo.

The discoverer bought the picture for eighty pounds and sold it thirty-five years later to the National Gallery for a hundred and thirty.

At the time in which he painted the Arnolfini Portrait, Jan van Eyck was a man of about fifty and a very considerable personage in European Society. He was the Court painter and personal attendant of Philip Duke of Burgundy and he accompanied the prince on many of his foreign travels. The fame of Jan van Eyck became widespread and soon eclipsed the reputation of his equally brilliant brother Hubert who, by reason of his shorter and more parochial existence, was remembered only by such devout persons as had worshipped before his altarpiece at Ghent.

Jan van Eyck's younger associate, **PETRUS CHRISTUS** (1410?-1473?), is a somewhat obscure character and is principally associated with his rôle as intermediary between Northern and Southern Europe. Petrus Christus, through his collaboration with Anto-



ROOM XV

SCHOOL OF JOACHIM PATINIR : Landscape ; River Scene

[No. 1298]

ROOM XV

nello da Messina at the Court of Milan, introduced into Italy the Northern method of oil painting and was responsible for the Italians' neglect of tempera in favour of the more luminous medium of oil.

Our representations of the art of Petrus Christus incline towards dulness, but the **Portrait of a Young Man** (No. 2593) reflects a close observation of detail. We can, indeed, enjoy the delicacy of the illuminated book which the young man holds in his hands and we may even try to decipher the rhymed prayer which is pinned to the wall above his head.

Van Eyck and Petrus Christus both worked principally at Bruges, but this city was not the only centre of artistic activity. At Tournai another important influence was at work in the person of the Master of Flémalle, or—as he is now identified—**ROBERT CAMPIN** (1375–1444).

Although Campin is to us a comparatively new discovery,¹ in his day he was exceedingly well known. He held an important office in the Painters' Guild at Tournai and was the nucleus of a great artistic influence.

With our **Madonna and Child** (No. 2609) we have something far removed from the Arnolfini portrait. The delicacy of execution is still with us, but the temperament is very different and, instead of van Eyck's urbane refinement, we see signs of an uncouth provincialism. The awkwardly posed Virgin of Robert Campin is an uncomely type with her heavy face and coarse hair and the room in which she sits is the interior of some ponderously-furnished bourgeois house.

¹ He was first identified with the Master of Flémalle by M. Georges Hulin, in 1909. See *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. XV (July, 1909), pp. 203–208.

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Nevertheless, the technique is exquisitely precise and there is much detail in which we can delight. The Virgin is seated back to the fireplace and the straw screen which protects her from the heat is ingeniously disposed so as to make a halo for her head. The flames from the fire can be seen above it. She sits upon a low settle which is adorned at the end by two carved lions. On the elaborately decorated console at her side stands a metal cup, perhaps symbolic of the chalice. Through the window, which is fitted with thick hinged shutters, studded with nails, we catch a glimpse of the little city of Tournai. The Virgin's house is apparently on some rising ground, just outside the city walls. Beyond the gates immediately below the window we can see an open square in which horsemen mingle with pedestrians. Round the square are shops and noblemen's houses, the latter distinguishable by their hanging escutcheons. At the door of one of the shops a woman is standing and, in the next house, against which a ladder is propped, workmen are repairing the roof. On the extreme right of the square a woman is looking out of a ground-floor window and talking to a man below. The city is very small, as we can see over the gates into the hilly country beyond.

Of Campin's best known pupil, **ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN** (c. 1400-1464), the National Gallery possesses no satisfactory representation. Our **The Magdalene Reading** (No. 654) is a gracious work in the style of Campin but gives but little idea of Rogier's greater achievements. It is only a fragment of a larger work and is, therefore, incomplete in its design and unimpressive in effect. **The Lady in a White Head-dress** (No. 1433) is a delicate work but does not show the

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decision of draughtsmanship which is usually associated with Rogier van der Weyden. Its attribution to the master's own work has therefore been renounced and it is now assigned to a member of his studio.

Of **DIRK BOUTS** (1400-1475), another pupil of Robert Campin, we have various representations.

Our **Entombment** (No. 664) is a deeply impressive picture and possesses a breadth of treatment and economy of detail which we do not always associate with the Flemish school. The picture reflects an Italian influence and is painted in tempera upon linen instead of in oil medium upon panel, the more usual method in the Netherlands. Tempera was very seldom used in the North except for large decorations and designs on banners.

The picture is planned with a profound sensibility and everything is placed so as to intensify the tragedy of the scene. Despite the lack of detail, the picture is painted with the utmost care and the outline of the back of Nicodemus (who stands at the end of the tomb) reveals evidence of repeated alterations.

Dirk Bouts was a versatile artist and the other facets of his talent are displayed in our **Virgin and Child** (No. 2595) and in the sensitive **Portrait of a Man** (No. 943). Dirk Bouts was a Dutchman by nationality and was born at Haarlem; he lived very little in Holland and finally set up his workshop in Louvain.

Among the generation of artists which followed Bouts and Van der Weyden the most famous were Hans Memlinc and **HUGO VAN DER GOES** (1435?-1482?). Unfortunately the National Gallery possesses no certain example of Van der Goes' work since even our **Death of the Virgin** (No. 658) is considered with suspicion.

FLEMISH SCHOOL

Notwithstanding, the little picture is dramatic in feeling and has the beauty of technical perfection. The design is composed in ascending planes, beginning with the figures kneeling at the foot of the bed and reaching its zenith in the vision of Christ and the angels who hover above the dying Virgin.

The work of **HANS MEMLING** (1430/35-1494) is more richly represented in our Gallery than that of Van der Goes, although the merit is of quantity rather than of quality. None of our representations of Memling's art does justice to the master of the Saint Ursula Casket and not even our well-known **Madonna and Child Enthroned in a Garden** (No. 686) is a very stimulating work. We feel indeed, for all the beauty of the landscape background, that the picture is formal and apathetic.

For a long time the National Gallery lacked any example of the work of **GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS** (c. 1465-1495), a Dutch painter who, by reason of his early date, is usually classed with the Flemish School. At last, in 1925, the Gallery acquired **The Nativity** (No. 4081), a most delicate and original work and one of the earliest known examples of a Night Scene. Such an audacious experiment as the representation of darkness in paint was unknown in the Netherlands at this date and was very rare in Italy. Piero della Francesca, it is true, had preceded Geertgen by forty years in his 'Tent of Alexander' at Arezzo, but Geertgen equalled the achievement of the Italian artist in his dramatic counterplay of light and shade such as is shown in the contrast of the light of the Angel appearing to the shepherds with the rays emanating from the Holy Child.

ROOM XV

Such a treatment of light was not employed for another hundred years, when it was adopted by Elsheimer in Germany and in the Low Countries by Rubens and Rembrandt.

Our **Marriage of St. Catherine** (No. 1085) by a **Follower of Geertgen tot Sint Jans** reveals the same tendency towards a strange effect of light. Here we find the Virgin seated in a formal garden. In the background is a wood of citron and cypress trees and in the wood is a cathedral from the interior of which a golden light emanates. The picture displays an intense observation of nature and the grass beneath the Virgin's feet is scattered with every sort of flower. The fringe of trees silhouetted against the evening sky is mysterious enough to induce us to forget the religious significance of the picture and we think of it only as some romantic nocturne.

The Legend of Saint Giles (No. 1419) by the **MASTER OF ST. GILES (Fifteenth Century)**, which hangs beside Geertgen's Nativity, is one of the freshest pictures of the Netherlandish School and its subject has its echo even in the present day when much is being done to ventilate the barbarism of an abominable form of sport. It depicts the saint rescuing his hind from the royal hunt. The driven animal has rushed to her master for protection and the arrow, which should have struck the hind, has pierced the hand of the saint. The king and his bishop, ashamed of their cruelty, kneel before Saint Giles.

The scene of the picture is the Valley of the Rhône and the saint's cave (with a pent roof and a crucifix hanging at the entrance) is set at the foot of a rock. The picture reveals an intense love of Nature. The tree

FLEMISH SCHOOL

which divides the composition into two halves is so minutely painted that we can detect the dead wood among the foliage. The hermit saint is surrounded by exquisite flowers, among which can be seen the purple iris and a tall mullen plant. The mullen is said to have been used for healing and has therefore a special significance in this picture.

The picture is part of a diptych and its companion piece, representing 'The Mass of St. Giles', is now in a private collection.

Another Dutchman by birth who is always associated with the Flemish School is **GERARD DAVID** (1460?-1523). Although he studied at Haarlem (perhaps with Geertgen tot Sint Jans), David spent most of his time in Flanders and worked at Bruges for the last forty years of his life. Our Gallery is fortunate in possessing five examples of his work, each of which is indicative of a different stage in his artistic development. Our earliest example—one of the earliest on record—is the **Christ Nailed to the Cross** (No. 3067). This, in its intense realism, is entirely Dutch in character. But this native influence was only transitory and, after the painter's removal from Haarlem to Bruges, he forgot his early surroundings and completely assimilated the spirit of the Netherlands. Our **Marriage of Saint Catherine** (No. 1432) excellently illustrates the change and, except for certain qualities of technique, the picture is almost indistinguishable from a Memlinc. The design is dull and formal but the background is delicious. The Virgin sits in a tiled court which borders upon a garden. On the left an angel is in the garden plucking grapes whilst further along, on the right, walks St. Anthony for whose chapel the picture was painted. Beyond the



ROOM XIV

PETER PAUL RUBENS: 'The Triumph of Silenus'

[No. 853]

ROOM XV

garden walls (upon which sits a bullfinch) is the city of Bruges. A stalk stands upon the chimney of the house on the left where an old woman looks out of a window. On the right are more houses and by the window of one of these houses a squirrel is eating a nut. Between the Virgin and the attendant on her left is a small plot of Madonna lilies and, on her right, blue irises entwine themselves in St. Catherine's wheel.

This picture has an opulence of colouring which is only excelled by the painter's later work, the **Canon with His Patron Saints** (No. 1045). In this magnificent picture the luxury of the sixteenth century is anticipated.

Gerard David marks the end of the fifteenth century and with the dawn of the new era we find a significant change in Netherlandish painting. The art of Flanders had already achieved a widespread reputation and all the countries of Northern Europe were adopting the æsthetic methods of the Low Countries. Flemish painters were everywhere encouraged and even Italy, who could boast of such a long artistic tradition, renounced the Southern medium of tempera in favour of the Northern medium of oil.

Flanders, moreover, had itself suffered a change and the centre of prosperity had moved from Bruges to Antwerp. In Antwerp the patrons of art were no longer princely connoisseurs but rich business men whose aim it was to exploit the popularity of Flemish painting. Art, then, was set upon a different basis and the fashion was fixed not by aristocratic collectors but by rich commercial magnates.

With the beginning of the new century we notice a new element enter into painting in the introduction of

FLEMISH SCHOOL

landscape. In the preceding age pictures were confined exclusively to portraiture and religious subjects, but with **JOACHIM PATINIR** (1485–1524) we see a definite insistence upon landscape painting. The Gallery possesses no work by this rare artist, although it has many representations of his School. Our exquisite **River Scene** (No. 1298) is one of the earliest examples of landscape used as the sole subject of a picture. The effect is curiously Oriental due to the artist's colour scheme of pale blues and whites. The scene is the painter's native country near Dinant on the Meuse—a region famous for its lime-kilns. It is thought that the figure beneath the tree on the left is the artist himself.

The delicacy of Patinir finds its equal in the work of **QUINTEN MASSYS** (1466–1530), whose **Madonna with Saints Catherine and Barbara** (No. 3664) (executed on linen in tempera) has an intelligent refinement and restraint of detail more comparable with the art of the early Italians than with the work of the sixteenth century Flemings.

One of the most important pictures in our Flemish room is the **Adoration of the Kings** (No. 2790) by **MABUSE** (1472?–1535?). Here we may fully appreciate the change which took place in painting after the centre of artistic activity had moved from Bruges to Antwerp. Under the new fashion set by the commercial magnates at Antwerp, restraint was no longer required in painting and the tasteful costliness of the old régime gave place to a wave of opulent extravagance. In his 'Adoration of the Kings' Mabuse fully realizes the artistic demand of the wealthy merchants for whom no design could be too involved nor any ornamentation too profuse. For us the picture contains a surfeit of detail

ROOM XV

and, despite the nine angels who hover (in descending scale) above the Virgin, the religious significance of the subject is swamped by the more dominant interest of silks and furs and precious stones.

The painting reveals a marvellous technique and every detail is represented with extraordinary minuteness and such passages as the King's robes and head-dresses, the 'orfèverie' in their hands and the coins in the Virgin's chalice are incomparable in their delicacy.

In the midst of this royal luxury there runs a vein of simple naturalism in which the artist reveals an interest in animal life. In the foreground are two white dogs and at the back of the ruined stable a donkey is eating a thistle. Through the doorway, immediately behind the Virgin, we see into the inner recesses of the stable and we can with difficulty discern the figures of people and oxen.

The picture is signed twice¹—once in the headdress of King Balthazar and again on the collar of his turbaned attendant.

Mabuse did not confine himself to the representation of devotional subjects and his mastery in the sphere of portraiture is well revealed in his portrait of the little girl with the astrolabe—**Jacqueline de Bourgogne** (?) (No. 2211)—the quintessence of solemn childhood.

It is interesting to compare the extravagant 'Adoration of the Kings' by Mabuse with the very different version of the same subject by **PIETER BRUEGEL** (1525–1569). Here we see the introduction into painting of an entirely new element, that of caricature.

¹ IENNINE GOS

IENNINE GOSSERT OGM

The artist's full name was Jan Gossart de Mabuse.

FLEMISH SCHOOL

Bruegel's *Adoration of the Kings* (No. 3556) is a piece of caustic satire and we are at once surprised by the unusual aspect of this familiar scene. The reason for the artist's bitterness is to be found in the date of his picture. This 'Adoration' was painted in 1564, a year in which the Netherlands were enjoying an unexpected peace. In this year it seemed that the iron hand of Spain had been finally removed from the Low Countries and that the people could again express their feelings without danger of imprisonment or the stake.

These hopes, however, were as false as they could be, and in the following year the Netherlands were invaded by the army of the Duke of Alva and the people were once more plunged into misery.

In Bruegel's picture we see a reflection of this feeling of national independence and the artist has satirized the 'Adoration' in a way which would have been impossible at any other time. The kneeling king has been deprived of every shred of majesty and remains the epitome of servile silliness; the second king, immediately behind him, has the face of a common villain and Balthazar is more Oriental than even the most ardent realist would, subsequently, have dared to make him. Even the Holy Family have not been spared the lash, for the Child could not be more simpering nor could Joseph be fatter nor more foolish. The crowd on the left consists of gaping yokels, whilst on the extreme right a Jew casts envious glances at the golden vessel borne by Balthazar.

Pieter Bruegel is a unique phenomenon in Flemish art and his life was worthy of wonder. For many years he was known only as a draughtsman and engraver and

ROOM XV

then, at the end of his career, he suddenly produced a series of grotesque and marvellous paintings.

In his technique as well as in his conceptions Bruegel differs from his Flemish contemporaries and, although a close observer of detail, he paints with a breadth of treatment in which the miniaturist traditions of the early Netherlanders are left behind and the florid genius of Rubens is announced.

OTHER NOTABLE PICTURES IN ROOM XV

DIRK BOUTS. Madonna and Child (No. 2595).

GERARD DAVID. Adoration of the Kings
(No. 1079).

FLEMISH SCHOOL. Exhumation of Saint Hubert
(No. 783).

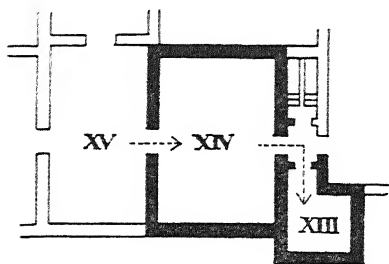
MARINUS V. REYMERSWAELE. Two Bankers
(No. 944).

MASSYS. The Crucifixion (No. 715).

MASTER FROM DELFT. The Crucifixion
(No. 2922).

MEMLING. Duke of Cleves (No. 2594).

ROOMS XIV AND XIII



AFTER the death of Pieter Bruegel, artistic genius appeared to have passed out of Flanders and painting in the Netherlands seemed in danger of coming to a sudden stop. Then, without warning, the situation was saved and a great genius arose in the person of **PETER PAUL RUBENS (1577-1640)**. Rubens, indeed, by his early studies in Italy, caught up the dying sparks of the Italian tradition and rekindled in Flanders the flame of art which had been so near to extinction.

With Rubens, Flemish painting assumed an entirely new character, for on to the technical perfection of the Flemish miniaturists were grafted the broad treatment and audacious learning of the great Italian masters. In spite of the outside influence of Italy and Spain, Rubens never became a veneered eclectic and, for all his inexhaustible imagination, he remained essentially Flemish.

Rubens was one of the most remarkable personalities in the whole history of painting. He was famous as a diplomat as well as painter and in 1629 he came to England on a diplomatic mission—to negotiate with Charles I for peace between England and Spain. He remained one year in England, during which time he

ROOMS XIV AND XIII

became an enthusiastic admirer of our country; he appreciated England's pleasant landscape and our national prosperity and he expressed enjoyment of the historical relics and fine collections of works of art. Whilst in London he executed many paintings and among his numerous activities he decorated the ceiling of the Inigo Jones Banqueting Room in Whitehall.¹ The National Gallery's picture of *Peace and War* (No. 46) is an example of his English period and was presented by the artist to Charles I. In 1630, he was knighted by the King and was given an honorary degree at Cambridge.

Rubens married twice and both marriages were fortunate. Of his first wife, Isabella Brant, he said that she lacked all the faults of her sex, and with his second, Hélène Fourment, he enjoyed many years of happiness and prosperity.

The princely qualities of Rubens' decoration gave him an enormous popularity and, prolific as he was, his commissions far exceeded the resources both of his time and energy. He employed, therefore, an enormous staff of assistants and pupils and, in many of his larger or more official works, only the design is by the master and the painting is the work of his studio.

In Trafalgar Square our Rubens Collection is not as extensive as that of most European art galleries and each picture has the merit of being entirely from the master's hand and reflects no trace of students' work. We have, moreover, representations of many facets of Rubens' versatility and possess masterpieces of portraiture and landscape as well as some magnificent mythological decorations [such as the famous *Judg-*

¹ Now the United Services Museum.

FLEMISH SCHOOL

ment of Paris (No. 194)] with which the artist is usually associated.

The Triumph of Silenus (No. 853)—a picture which once belonged to Richelieu—is a marvel of brilliant painting and, for all its breadth of treatment, the draughtsmanship is impeccable and each detail is closely observed.

Every passage deserves a special study and the painting of the fruit is delicate enough to arouse the admiration of the most fastidious miniaturist.

The work is instinct with movement and we feel that, at any moment, the ample figure of the Wine God will be bustled off the end of the picture and we shall be left to contemplate the empty canvas.

The Rape of the Sabines (No. 38) is no less brilliant than the Silenus and it is even more audacious as a composition. The scene represents the carrying off of the Sabine Women by the companions of Romulus. High up, on the right, sits Romulus directing the activities and beneath him the women are being borne away. The whole thing is a masterpiece of turbulent action and the ladies, though buxom, seem really to be engaged in a violent struggle.

As a portrait painter Rubens was always much in demand and he worked for a wealthy and aristocratic clientèle. Our masterpiece in this sphere is the well-known **Chapeau de Paille** (No. 852). This piquant and most vivacious portrait represents Suzanne Fourment, the sister of the artist's second wife, in her most fashionable apparel. The name 'Le Chapeau de Paille' has caused much confusion as the lady's hat is not of straw but of felt and the picture should, therefore, be called 'Le Chapeau de Poil'. The former name, how-

ROOMS XIV AND XIII

ever, is traditional, though incorrect, and is a corruption of the term 'Chapeau d'Espagne'.

Rubens is an artist of such dazzling versatility that certain of his talents are eclipsed by others and his brilliance as a landscape painter is often overlooked. But we have, in this gallery, three of his greatest landscapes and our famous picture *The Château de Steen* (No. 66) represents his masterpiece in this 'genre'.¹

Here we see the artist's country house, near Malines, caught by the sun on some autumn afternoon. Such a combination of intense naturalism and airy spaciousness was a novelty in painting and the picture had an enormous influence both abroad and in England. Its exhibition at the British Institution caused a sensation among painters and Turner, Constable and Crome were all affected by it.

The principal feature of the picture is its atmospheric freshness but the details are closely observed. The cart,

¹ The picture was presented to the National Gallery by Sir George Beaumont, one of the greatest of our benefactors and the virtual founder of the Gallery, since it was he who first suggested that London should have a national collection. He gave many pictures to the Gallery, including Claude's famous *Landscape with Figures* (No. 61).

His friendship with Constable brought Sir George Beaumont into contact with more modern methods of painting and he could never quite accustom himself to the artist's use of fresh greens for the portrayal of foliage rather than the brown tones used by Wilson and the earlier painters. When shown a finished product of Constable's work, he not infrequently would ask, 'And where is your brown tree, Mr. Constable?' On one occasion, this observation irritated the painter so much that he took a violin and laid it on the lawn, hoping that the obvious difference of tone would, at last, convince his old-fashioned patron of the 'greenery' of nature.

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in the foreground, contains a calf which is tied down ready for market and a copper jug in the cart glistens in the afternoon light with which the château windows are also caught. In the foreground, a man is about to shoot some partridges—inordinately large—and on the extreme right some smaller birds, perhaps chaffinches, are flying in the sky.

Of Rubens' many pupils the most famous is **SIR ANTHONY VAN DYCK (1599–1641)**. Like his master, Van Dyck worked at the English court and followed Rubens as official painter to Charles I. He remained in London for nine years until his death in 1641. England proved a very happy home for him and he expressed his love of the English countryside.

Van Dyck was, like Rubens, overpowered by the number of commissions which he received and he employed a large suite of assistants. Some paintings attributed to him bear very little trace of the master's hand and others are entirely studio work.

Van Dyck spent two years in Rubens' workshop and our **Emperor Theodosius with St. Ambrose** (No. 50) testifies the precocious genius of the young pupil. The picture is a copy of a large work by Rubens (now in the Vienna Gallery) and it reveals an ardent imitation of the master's style.

Our striking portrait of **Cornelius van der Geest** (No. 52) is another early work in which the brilliance of Rubens is reflected.

Van Dyck was also an enthusiastic student of the Italian masters and he spent seven years in the South painting portraits and studying the art of Italy. The famous picture of **The Balbi Children**, lent to the National Gallery by Lady Lucas, reflects the Italian

ROOMS XIV AND XIII

influence and the deep red colour which pervades the picture is the result of the artist's study of Titian. It is possible that this picture was inspired by Titian's 'Cornaro Family' (No. 4452) which was once in Van Dyck's possession.

Another aspect of Van Dyck's talent is shown in the **George and Francis Villiers** (No. 3605). Here we see the artist in his English period when his genius for brilliant colouring and facile draughtsmanship found its full development.

Our most famous representation of Van Dyck's art, the colossal **Equestrian Portrait of Charles I** (No. 1172), does not hang in this room but is placed with the English pictures in Room XXV. It must be remembered that the King was a generous patron of the arts and was second only to Francis I in his encouragement of artistic activity. His magnificent collection of pictures contained such universal masterpieces as the Raphael cartoons (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum), the Mantegna 'Triumph of Caesar' (now at Hampton Court) and the Wilton Diptych.

In spite of Rubens' extensive studio not many of his pupils achieved an individual success, and **JAKOB JORDAENS (1593-1678)** was one of the few to share with Van Dyck the rare distinction of world-wide reputation. Jordaens, however, is Van Dyck's antithesis and achieved success in a sphere which his fellow-student would have despised. He was, indeed, no courtly painter of the aristocratic world, but liked to portray the gross conviviality of the Flemish bourgeoisie.

In our gallery we have no example of Jordaens' rollicking festivity, for our **Holy Family** (No. 3215)

FLEMISH SCHOOL

is an astonishingly sober subject to attract this jovial painter. The picture, however, is no devotional piece and the title is but a thin disguise for a Family Group. The Madonna is the artist's wife and the Christ Child is his little daughter.

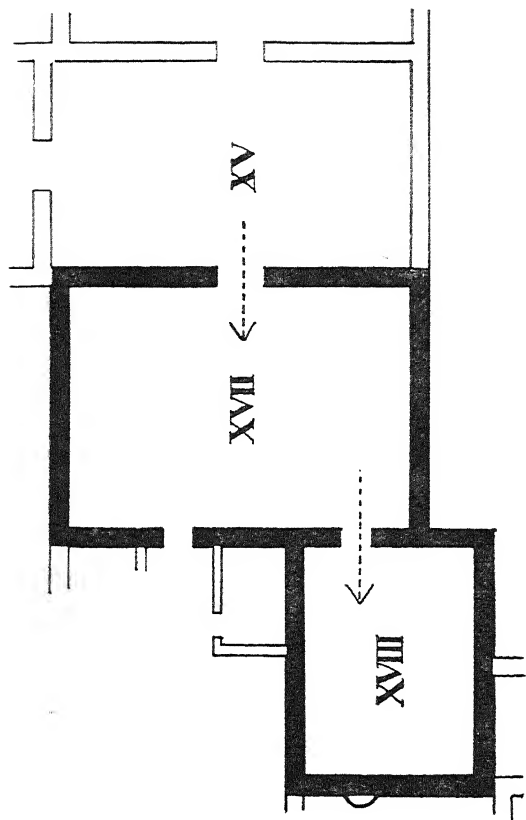
It is a pity that the National Gallery should possess no example of Jordaens' Rabelaisian extravagance, but it is chiefly in the Netherlands that the artist can be seen at his best and there we find him in his most characteristic mood, florid but unashamed.

ROOM XIII

is less important than most of the rooms in the National Gallery and, owing to its small size and bad lighting, only works of secondary significance can be placed there.

At the present time, the room contains pictures of the early Flemish School and a fine set of Rubens Drawings.

SPANISH SCHOOL
ROOMS XVII AND XVIII



SPANISH SCHOOL

ROOMS XVII AND XVIII

OUR Spanish rooms are not, superficially, among the most attractive in the gallery and the first impression might well be one of a set of large, heavy paintings. This lack of outward charm does not, however, excuse a hasty study and many of our Spanish pictures are great and important masterpieces.

ROOM XVII

The picture which first arrests our attention in Room XVII is *The Agony in the Garden* (No. 3476) by EL GRECO (1545-1614). This incomparable master was not a Spaniard by nationality but a Greek, born at Candia, in Crete. His real name, Domenico Theotocopoulos, is now used only by students and he is universally acknowledged as El Greco (the Greek). Greco left Candia at an early age to study painting in Venice where he became the pupil of Tintoretto. In 1575 he left Venice for Spain and resided in Toledo where he worked until his death in 1614. Greco's position in Spain became so definitely assured that his Cretan origin was forgotten and he was everywhere regarded as a Spanish citizen.

The art of El Greco is not easy and it requires a special study and understanding. Those who demand in art no more than a photographic representation of natural appearances will hurry past his pictures and exploit their fancy upon some Dutch interior. There is, however, much more in art than that which the camera can give us and El Greco, for his mastery of all the things which matter most in painting, must be

SPANISH SCHOOL

considered one of the most profound, nervous and imaginative artists that the world has ever seen.

In the National Gallery picture of Gethsamene, the artist transcends the representation of natural appearance and sacrifices everything to the mental stress which caused the hours in the garden to be agonizing. The figure of Christ is made gaunt by suffering and His face is indicative of intense mental pain. His kneeling form occupies the centre of the composition; on the right is a bridge across which Judas and the soldiers are advancing and on the left the Angel appears on a cloud which envelops the sleeping Apostles. Even the heavens are troubled by the atmosphere of tragedy and the moon is half-hidden by a trail of swirling clouds.

El Greco's picture is impressive from every point of view; the colours are as dramatic as the composition and the lemon yellow of the Angel's garment makes a splendid contrast with the blood-red shadows of Christ's robe. The lines, moreover, are instinct with life and are as vital as flickering flames.

The picture is a vision of the Agony in the garden. It is as if, in the midst of a great storm, the heavens were opened and the scene was revealed at the zenith of its intensity—only to be hidden, a second later, by the darkness of the rolling clouds.

The Christ Driving the Traders from the Temple (No. 1457) is a less exciting work than the Agony, but it is executed with the same electric vitality and reveals a sense of swift dramatic movement.

El Greco's activities were confined to the solitary city of Toledo, but in the more central communities of Madrid and Seville a band of progressive artists

ROOM XVII

was at work. Our Franciscan Monk (No. 230), by FRANCESCO ZURBARAN (1598-1662), an artist of the next generation, reveals an entirely different facet of Spanish painting from that displayed by El Greco and here we are safely in the realms of realism. The picture has a monumental impressiveness and possesses a dignity not far behind that of Rembrandt or Velasquez.

The only other example of Zurbaran in our Gallery, the Lady as Saint Margaret (No. 1930), is the reverse of the Franciscan and is as petty as the other is powerful. The picture, though a popular favourite, has no serious intellectual nor æsthetic significance and is nothing more than a portrait of a rather foolish young girl masquerading as a Saint.

The study of Greco and Zurbaran leads us on to VELASQUEZ (1599-1660). It is impossible to appreciate the full range of this great painter without a visit to Vienna and Madrid where his most famous masterpieces hang, but in the National Gallery, though it cannot compete with either of those collections in its representation of Velasquez, we can obtain a fine idea of the artist's power and versatility.

Our earliest work, the Christ in the House of Martha (No. 1375), reveals an aspect of Velasquez' talent which is not often seen. It is a work of his early youth when he was engaged upon the portrayal of the kitchen scenes or *bodegones*, fashionable in Seville at the time. The picture, despite its coarseness of type and its pedestrian subject, is painted with a masterly accomplishment and such culinary details as the eggs, fish and peeled onion are executed with a precision which would have pleased the most fastidious among the Dutch.

SPANISH SCHOOL

The **Christ at the Column** (No. 1148), though an early work, is more mature than the 'House of Martha' and in it we have a foretaste of the master's latent power. The figures of the angel and the little Saint Bridget are sensitive portraits of Spanish types, but the Christ is rather theatrically poised and reflects the influence of Guido Reni and his circle for whom the extremes of melodrama made more appeal than the restraint of tragedy.

The famous **Philip IV, when Young** (No. 1129) brings a startling change and here we see Velasquez as an assured master. This picture was executed only a little later than the 'Christ at the Column', but the artist had been to Italy in the meantime and had studied the work of Titian and Veronese. The portrait combines a delicacy of execution with a searching penetration into character and the figure of the young king is in no way made a vehicle for the artist's extraordinary facility in painting a stuff of silver brocade.

No picture in the National Gallery has been so much in the public eye as the **Venus and Cupid** (No. 2057) from Rokeby Hall. Its purchase in 1906 by the National Art Collections Fund for £45,000 caused a sensation, but there was even greater disquiet when the picture was slashed in 1914 by suffragettes.

Although the damage was very drastic, the picture was miraculously repaired and only slight traces of the cuts can now be seen. The picture is composed with a masterly wisdom and the reclining Venus and her attendant make a beautiful lunette design. Although the Goddess lies upon a green and white garment suggesting the sea from which she was born, we are not deceived by her rôle of divinity and we take her at



ROOM XVII

EL GRECO : The Agony in the Garden

[No. 3176]

ROOM XVII

once for a handsome model posing elegantly for the artist.

The towering personality of Velasquez dominates Spanish painting so strongly that such a reposeful painter as **BARTOLOMÉ MURILLO** (1617-1682) is likely to be completely overshadowed.

Murillo has achieved an enormous popularity through his attractive portrayal of devotional subjects, and those who are not embarrassed by cloying sentiment will find pleasure in the **St. John and the Lamb** (No. 176) and the **Holy Family** (No. 13). This kind of work came very easy to Murillo's facile talent and he at once exploited his popularity by painting a large number of canvases in this style. It must not, however, be thought that all these pictures are worthless, for many, though over-sweet, are works of great technical distinction.

Murillo's art had more than one facet and in his painting of peasant children he shows a more impressive talent. Our **Boy Drinking** (No. 1286), although not certain in its attribution, indicates a style in which the artist achieved a lesser, though perhaps more deserved, success.¹

The last of the great Spanish artists was **FRANCISCO GOYA** (1746-1828) and he was by no means the least versatile. He could apply his hand to almost every kind of painting and he was as successful in serious portraiture as in satiric 'genre'. In the popular consideration, Goya is usually associated with a penchant for 'Grand Guignol', and such subjects as 'Thyestes Feast' and 'Satan Devouring his Children' are generally thought to have been most congenial to

¹ A finer example of Murillo's 'peasant genre' is the **Spanish Peasant Boy** (No. 74), which hangs in Room, XVIII.

SPANISH SCHOOL

his demoniacal temperament. This is, however, a one-sided view since Goya's mood was not always sinister and he has given us many charming scenes of national life.

In this room, Goya is represented by two great portraits which reveal the artist's delicacy of touch and searching insight into character. The **Dr. Peral** (No. 1951) is an ominous portrait of a man with a twisted lip and the **Doña Isabel De Porcel** (No. 1473) is a dignified study of a lady in a mantilla. The latter picture has not the crispness of the former and has suffered a little from restoration.

ROOM XVIII

THE more fantastic side of Goya's genius is seen in Room XVIII in *The Bewitched* (No. 1472). This representation of a priest, terrified by a vision of grinning demons and dancing mules, illustrates a scene from a popular play.

The Picnic (No. 1471) is the antithesis of the 'Bewitched' and is as sunny and cheerful as the other is macabre. The technique reveals a sure rapidity and the painting has the feathery lightness of some delicious 'soufflé'.

This small room contains many interesting pictures, such as *The Matador* (No. 3138) by **MARIANO FORTUNY** (1838-1874) which, though superficial compared with Goya, is a facile work; the *Duel in the Pardo* (No. 1376) by **DEL MAZO** (1600?-1667); the *Immaculate Conception* (No. 3910) by **MURILLO** (1617-1682); and the *Saint Paul Reading* (No. 3590) by an unknown artist of the **SPANISH SCHOOL**. This last picture has been aptly, if somewhat heretically, compared with Whistler's *Portrait of his Mother*.

The room also contains a few fine Spanish primitives.

On leaving the Spanish room we enter the East Vestibule, where the mosaic pavement has been most adroitly laid by **MR. BORIS ANREP**. The section in the East Vestibule representing *The Pleasures of Life* has its counterpart across the way (in the West Vestibule) in the *Labours of Life* which, in spite of its more sombre title, is no less diverting than the former section and equally provocative and original.

The West Vestibule contains the famous *Dido Building Carthage* (No. 498) by **J. M. W. TURNER** (1775-1851). This picture and the *Sun Rising*

THE EAST AND WEST VESTIBULES

through Vapour (No. 479) were painted by Turner as a deliberate challenge to Claude and the artist bequeathed the two pictures to the National Gallery only on the condition that they should be hung near two specified Claudes.

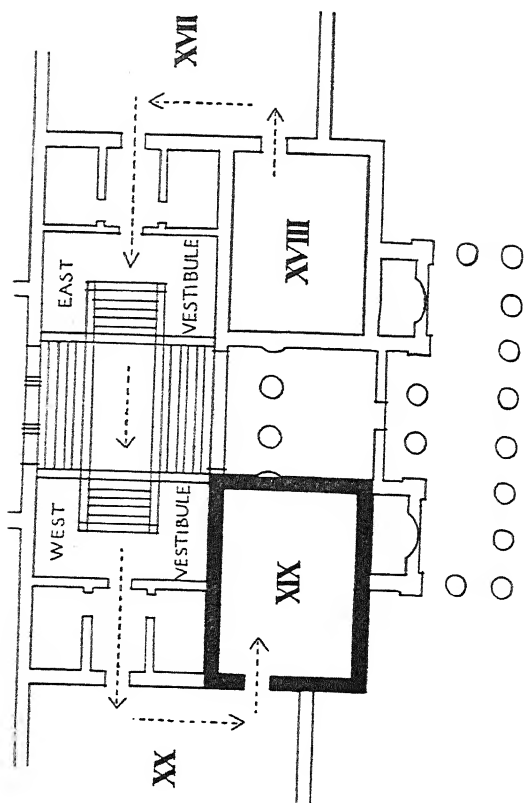
Turner's 'Dido' has an extraordinary similarity to its counterpart, the **Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba** (No. 14) by CLAUDE (1600-1682), and were it not for its more elaborate composition and slightly damaged condition, the English picture would be almost indistinguishable from any characteristic work by the French painter.

Turner, who never signed a picture, made an exception of this case and signed and inscribed his 'Dido Building Carthage' in the truly Claudian fashion.

On the north wall of each of these two Vestibules hangs a masterpiece by CANALETTO (1697-1768), the prince of Venetian landscape painters. On the West Vestibule is the well-known **On the Grand Canal** (No. 163) and in the east wing is a famous view of the **Scuola di San Rocco** (No. 937). The latter picture represents the Maundy Thursday ceremony when the Doge and Officers of State with the confraternity of San Rocco—a philanthropical brotherhood—proceeded to the Church of St. Mark.

GERMAN SCHOOL

ROOM XIX



GERMAN SCHOOL

ROOM XIX

ON leaving the Spanish pictures we must cross the Vestibule and pass through the early French room into Room XIX, which is devoted to the painters of Germany.

Unfortunately our German room is very small and inadequate. When the National Gallery was founded, very little was known in England about German painting and even the greatest masters of the School were insufficiently appreciated.

The earliest picture in our German room is the **Holy Trinity** (No. 3662) of the **FRANCO-RHENISH SCHOOL**. This work was, for a long time, placed among the French School as it is closely allied to the work of the Burgundian miniaturists. But it is no longer considered entirely French in origin and the soft treatment of the heads and the apple-green draperies are now thought indubitably to point to the influence of the School of Cologne.

An important example of this School is the **Three Saints** (No. 705) by **STEFAN LOCHNER** of Cologne (c. 1400-1451). This gracious work is strangely Italian in character and has not the glittering perfection usually associated with the painting of the Northern Schools. The picture represents St. Catherine, accompanied on either side by St. Matthew and St. John. St. Matthew (who is himself attended by a diminutive angel) holds the Book of the Gospel whilst St. John is bearing the chalice containing the venomous asp. His eagle stands on a stone beside his feet.

Stefan Lochner is the greatest master of the School of Cologne. His famous altarpiece, now in Cologne

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Cathedral, won the admiration of the great Dürer who considered it a work of extraordinary grace and sensibility.

ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471–1528) is represented in our collection by only one picture, the **Portrait of his Father** (No. 1938). This picture—one of four versions of the same subject¹—was given a hostile reception by the critics on its purchase for the Gallery in 1904 and on all sides its authenticity was suspected. There seems little doubt, however, that the work is genuine since we know its history from the year 1636, when it was presented to Charles I by the city of Nuremberg—together with Dürer's 'Self Portrait'—which now hangs in the Prado at Madrid.

Dürer was, with Holbein, the greatest genius and most versatile painter that Germany ever produced, and the absence of other facets of his art is one of the most serious *lacuna* in this most comprehensive of National Collections.

Dürer's younger contemporary, **LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER (1472–1553)**, was a brilliant artist with a decided turn for the grotesque. In his life-time he achieved a wide-spread popularity and he travelled extensively in Europe and the East. In his later years he became Court-painter to the Electors of Saxony and his pictures were the most fashionable of the day.

The artist became especially famous for his portrayal of the nude, and our **Charity** (No. 2925) bears witness to the kind of picture which was popular with his more light-hearted patrons. The types of the 'Charity' are ugly but the picture is executed with a skilful excellence and the artist's unembarrassed conception of this least

¹ The others are in Munich, Frankfort, and at Syon House.

ROOM XIX

self-conscious of Virtues displays a vein of humorous originality. The picture is signed with Cranach's usual device of the crowned serpent.

The undoubted pride of our small collection of German pictures is the two works by **HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (1497-1543)**. Of all the German artists, Holbein is most closely connected with England since a great part of his life was spent in our country. He was born in Germany, at Augsburg, but lived many years on the Swiss frontier at Basle. In 1526 he came to England with a letter of introduction from Erasmus to Sir Thomas More. He remained in England for two years and then, after another three years in Switzerland, he returned to London and became Court-painter to Henry VIII. He died in London in the year 1543.

Our picture, **The Ambassadors** (No. 1314), seems at first sight a large heavy painting, but a few moments' study will show that it is a work of exceptional historical and æsthetic interest. It represents Jean de Dinteville, the French Ambassador in London, with his learned friend Georges de Selve, later the Bishop of Lavour. The picture was painted in 1533, the year in which de Dinteville took up his ambassadorial duties in London and de Selve came to England on a mission and stayed with his friend at the French Embassy. The picture is, therefore, wrongly named the 'Ambassadors' and should be known as 'The Ambassador and His Friend'. De Dinteville's age (28) is inscribed on the sheath of the dagger in his hand, whereas the age of de Selve (25) is seen on the edge of the book upon which he rests his right arm.

The picture is crowded with innumerable interesting details. The figures stand against a high table covered

GERMAN SCHOOL

with an Oriental pile rug on which lie many instruments, both mathematical and astronomical, representing the sciences in which the two men are versed. All the instruments are accurately portrayed and some of them reoccur, with equal precision, in the famous portrait of George Giske in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin.

On the lower shelf of the table are two books, a globe, a lute and a case of flutes. All these details are most accurately observed. One of the books is a mathematical treatise, in which the owner has marked his place with a set square, and the other is an open hymn book displaying a Lutheran Hymn and a shortened version of the Decalogue. The lute has one broken string and the coil of the released gut is painted with an incomparable delicacy. Even the globe deserves examination, for on it we can see a ship on its way to America and a representation of the Continent of Africa, most queerly shaped and like an elongated version of Spain.

The figures of the two dignitaries stand upon a tessellated pavement, a replica of the floor in front of the High Altar at Westminster. In the centre foreground is a curious oval-shaped object which has been taken both for the artist's palette and a dried fish. It is, however, neither of these things but is a deliberate anamorphosis of a human skull. If one looks along the picture from the right-hand side one can clearly recognize the skull in correct proportion. This fantastic caprice is not peculiar to Holbein, but was a fashionable trick at the time; such distortions, indeed, were not the domain only of skilful artists, but were also a modish parlour-game. A similar example of an

ROOM XIX

'anamorphosis' can be seen in the elongated portrait of Prince Edward in the National Portrait Gallery.

It is not certain why Holbein inserted this exotic detail into his picture; it seems unlikely that such an obviously gifted draughtsman should have to employ these laborious means merely to demonstrate his sleight-of-hand and eye. Perhaps a death's head was the heraldic device of the Ambassador de Dinteville (he wears a tiny skull upon his cap), and it was this which prompted Holbein to include the skull?

Whatever may be the reason of Holbein's eccentricity, the anamorphosis assists the composition of the picture and provides a link between the two standing figures which would otherwise tend to make the picture exaggerated and formal.

The background is provided by a green brocaded curtain and, on the top left-hand corner, one can, with difficulty, discern a small silver crucifix.

The picture is signed and dated: JOHANNES HOLBEIN PINGEBAT, 1533: but the writing is very difficult to see. The more patient of us, however, can find it immediately below the bottom edge of the ermine trimming on de Dinteville's mantle.

Our second great Holbein, **The Duchess of Milan** (No. 2475), is very different from the Ambassadors, being as frugal in detail as the other is profuse. The portrait reflects an interesting historical episode and reveals to us some of Holbein's more intimate activities at the English Court.

In 1538, Henry VIII was again in search of a wife and he was informed of the charms of the young Princess Christina of Denmark, the girl bride and widow, after two years of marriage, of the Duke of Milan. Hol-

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bein was sent to Brussels expressly to paint her portrait and we are told that he finished his sketch of the Duchess after one sitting of three hours.

Although Henry was seriously attracted by the Duchess' portrait, Christina was sensible enough not to engage herself in matrimony with the English King, and the rumour goes that she replied to the emissaries of Henry that had she two heads she would willingly leave one at the disposal of the King but having only one she preferred to keep it for herself.

Holbein's picture is composed with an extraordinary economy and its proportions are exceptionally long and narrow. The figure is most delicately conceived and her refined hands are a marvel of technical perfection. The colour scheme is sombre. The background is of deep slate blue and the only touches of brightness are the Duchess' gloves which balance happily with the cartellino on the wall and her ruby ring which finds an echo in the red of her lips.

The Duchess wears a widow's cap and a black silk pelisse, lined with fur, which partially covers her satin dress.

The picture has a romantic history. It was originally in the Duke of Norfolk's collection and in 1909 it came into the market. Despite public appeals and the efforts of the National Art Collections Fund, only £20,000 out of the necessary £60,000 could be raised and the picture was on the point of going to America. At the last moment, a telegram was received promising the remaining £40,000. The donor, whose name has never been made public, was a lady and by her act of generosity she saved one of our most treasured possessions from crossing the Atlantic.



ROOM XVII

VELÁZQUEZ : Venus and Cupid

[No. 2957]

ROOM XIX

Hans Holbein is the last great name in German art, but he was not the last painter to exercise an important influence. ADAM ELSHEIMER (1578-1610), although a far less gifted painter, had an even greater influence and made an impression in many parts of Europe. His pictures are ingenuously composed but trivial in conception and we have only to look at any of our four examples—take, for instance, the Tobias and the Angel (No. 1424)—to recognize this fact.

OTHER NOTABLE PICTURES IN THIS ROOM

HANS BALDUNG. The Dead Christ (No. 1427).

Portrait of a Man (A Senator) (bearing the faked signature of A. Dürer) (No. 245).

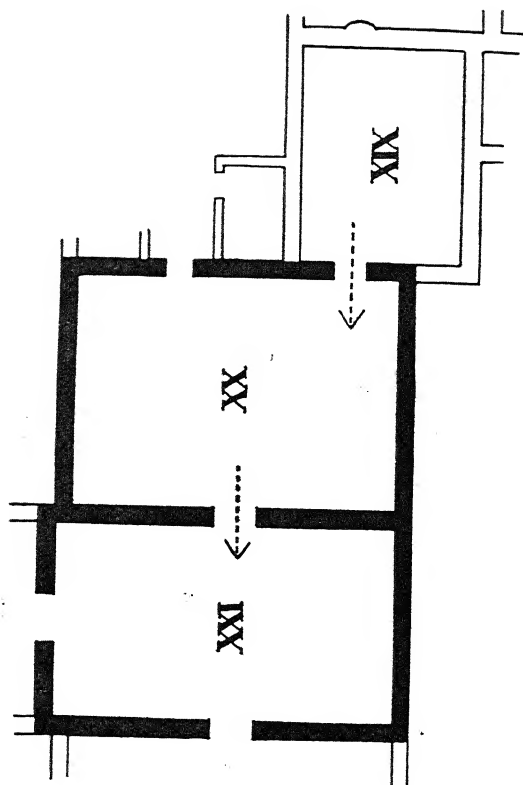
LUCAS CRANACH. The Virgin with Saints. (Lent by H.M. the King.)

GERMAN SCHOOL. Portrait of a Lady (No. 722).

MASTER OF WERDEN. Conversion of St. Hubert (No. 252). The Mass of Saint Hubert (No. 253).

CHRISTIAN DIETRICH. Itinerant Musicians (No. 205).

FRENCH SCHOOL
ROOMS XX AND XXI



FRENCH SCHOOL

ROOMS XX AND XXI

OUR collection of French pictures is not considered one of the Gallery's most proud possessions, and for the later Schools of French painting one must go especially to Hertford House and Millbank. Nevertheless, the claims of the Wallace Collection, though undoubtedly greater in the domains of Watteau and Fragonard, cannot rival us in the representation of the seventeenth century in France and our examples of Poussin and Claude are some of the finest in the world.

One of the earliest pictures in the first French room is **The Meeting of Joachim and Anna** (No. 4092) by the **MASTER OF MOULINS** (c. 1480-1520?). The preservation of the pigments in this picture is so astonishingly fresh that we are apt to forget that the work is of an early date and by a painter of whom the world knows little. The Master of Moulins was, however, an important personage in his day, being attached to the Court of the Bourbon princes. It is possible that he is identical with Jean Perréal, the much-extolled Court painter to Charles VIII.

The scene depicts the meeting of Joachim and Anna (the parents of the Virgin) by the Golden Gate of the Temple. The gate, however, is not golden but a typical mediæval portal and the city of Jerusalem is represented by a series of castellated buildings, perhaps Moulins, the artist's native city.

The design is made lop-sided by the detached figure of Charlemagne standing to the right. This proves that the panel is the left-hand portion of a triptych of which the central part (possibly representing the Virgin and

FRENCH SCHOOL

Child) is lost and the right-hand portion is now in Chicago. It is not difficult to imagine what the complete design would have been, for the standing figure of the King was obviously balanced by a similarly poised figure of a saint on the right-hand panel.

The early works of the French School did not have much influence and were overshadowed by the contemporary painting in Italy. France, indeed, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was so much disturbed by wars and rebellions that little energy was spared for painting and the only pictures encouraged were portable altarpieces, or small personal tokens sent from friend to friend.¹

At the end of the sixteenth century the political situation in France began to settle and, at the dawn of the next hundred years, art was already being encouraged as an essential factor of national life. Under the rule of Henry IV, the golden age of French Thought came definitely to be crystallized and the King, by his valour and foresight, restored France to a condition of prosperity and made Paris the capital upon which the eyes of all Europe were fixed.

With this return of fortune, a strong desire for art was felt and the buildings of Paris, which had become dingy through years of poverty and unrest, underwent a period of lavish decoration. The wars, indeed, had not ceased but they were conducted in foreign lands and in such a masterly fashion that those at home could encourage the arts with an unruffled mind. Artists, too, were better paid and, instead of being regarded as

¹ The greatest and almost the sole French painter of the fifteenth century, Jean Fouquet, is among the rarest of artists and, unfortunately, not represented in our Gallery.

ROOMS XX AND XXI

suspicious mountebanks, they were given an honourable position in the social scale.

In Paris, Italian art became the rage and a painter to be successful had to show some reflection of the South. Rome, therefore, became the goal of French artists, and many painters settled there for life.

Amongst those ardent Italianizers and settlers in the Eternal City, there is none more famous than **NICOLAS POUSSIN (1594-1665)**. Except to become more fully steeped in the spirit of antiquity, Poussin had no need to isolate himself from his country at this time since the dominant desire of the French in the seventeenth century was to catch something of classical learning, and the universal cry of all French artists was 'Back to the purity of Greece and Rome'. The seventeenth century in France was one of rigid classicism and the aim of all writers and painters, such as **Boileau and Racine**, Poussin and Claude, was to eliminate any secondary emotion and to reduce art to its most perfect chastity and most logical essentials.

Poussin, like Mantegna, was completely immersed in classical learning and there is not one of his pictures which does not possess the compositional chastity of some marmoreal relief.

Our **Bacchanalian Festival (No. 42)** is a splendid work revealing a study of Italian art. A deliberate echo of Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne' is seen in the vase which lies on the drapery in the foreground.

The **Cephalus and Aurora (No. 65)** is a more famous work and, in spite of its damaged condition, it still remains one of the loveliest linear symphonies in our Gallery. The picture represents Cephalus being tempted by Aurora to remain with her rather than

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depart upon Pegasus, the winged horse. A Cupid tantalizes Cephalus even further by holding up a portrait of his wife, Procris. But Cephalus must quickly decide his fate as the dawn is about to break and the chariot of Phoebus is already flashing across the sky.

Poussin did not always depend for his effect upon the movement of figures and, in the sensuous **Landscape** (No. 40), our interest is mainly held by the artist's suggestion of an ultramarine afternoon.

Poussin's principal associate in Rome was **CLAUDE GELÉE 'LE LORRAIN'** (1600-1682). From childhood Claude had had a penchant towards Rome, but it was quite by chance that he went there, at the age of thirteen, in the hope of finding employment as a pastrycook. He entered the service of a painter, Agostino Tassi, an artist of considerable ability but unsavoury reputation. Claude remained with Tassi for nine years and rose from the rank of household servant to that of a studio assistant.

The painter never severed his connection with Rome and his only long absence was his visit to Nancy, where he was commissioned to decorate a church. But the sight of a colleague falling from the scaffolding was enough to make Claude break his contract and to return immediately to Italy.

Although his early years entailed a constant artistic activity, Claude did not gain his reputation until late in life and he was not definitely assured as a master of painting until after he had passed the forties.

Claude was no less classically-minded than Poussin, and all his works have a sharp intellectual purity. He was, however, more romantically disposed than his great colleague and certain of his landscapes transcend the furthest bounds of imagination.



ROOM XX

NICOLAS POUSSIN : Landscape with Figures

ROOMS XX AND XXI

Claude showed a particular tendency towards sea-port scenes (perhaps the result of conversations with the disreputable Tassi, who had himself been sentenced to the galleys) and this sphere of his work is represented by the Gallery's masterpiece, **The Embarkation of Saint Ursula** (No. 30). Nothing could be more beautiful than this vision of a city by the sea and, for all the artist's insistence upon the subject matter, we forget St. Ursula and her companions and concentrate our attention upon the blue of the water and the turquoise tones of the sky.

Another of Claude's enchanted harbours, the famous **Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba** (No. 14), hangs in the West Vestibule by the side of Turner's rival picture, the 'Dido Building Carthage'. The English artist, wishing to surpass the French painter in his own sphere, left it in his will that his 'Dido' should hang in our National Gallery beside Claude's 'Queen of Sheba'.

Claude has always been much loved in England and the **Landscape with Figures** (No. 61) (in the next room, XXI) was one of the most precious possessions of Sir George Beaumont, our great benefactor. He used to take it about with him wherever he went and, after having presented the picture to the Gallery, his sense of loss overcame him and he made vain efforts to get it back. The picture has had various titles and was originally called 'The Annunciation'—but the figures are of no account, being completely overshadowed by the landscape background.

An interesting picture in this first French room (XX) is the **Three Portraits of Cardinal Richelieu** (No. 798) by **PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE** (1602-1674). These clear-cut portraits, all three on one panel, are an

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interesting proof that the two sides of the face are not the same, for it is at once apparent that the left profile of the Cardinal differs considerably from the right. The artist has called our attention to this phenomenon by the inscription (now half-erased): *De ces deux profils, cecy est le meilleur* (Of these two profiles, this one is the better).

ROOM XXI

This room is devoted to the later schools of French painting and to the artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

At the mention of eighteenth-century French painting, the first name which springs to the mind is that of ANTOINE WATTEAU (1684-1721), and it is an irreparable disappointment to many that the National Gallery possesses only one example of this most exquisite of French painters and most sensitive of French draughtsmen.

Our little picture, *La Gamme d'Amour* (No. 2897), has more in it than meets the eye and our regret that it is the sole representation of Watteau in our Gallery is tempered by the interest which the painting gives us. The picture is admirably composed and the central figures form a pyramidal mass of which the crowning point is the terminal bust which we see half-enveloped in the trees. The painting could not be more exquisite and the lady's silvery sleeve makes a delicious contrast with the gentleman's cap of purple velvet.

The figures of this gallant pair reoccur in a famous picture in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin.

ROOM XXI

Watteau's influence was widespread and every lover of the Rococo tried to imitate his subtle style. **NICOLAS LANCRET** (1690-1743) was one of the many who made valiant attempts to rival the skill of Watteau, but whereas the master's pictures have an infinite interest, the pupil's have only a superficial delicacy and do not bear the test of long examination. Our **Four Ages of Man** (Nos. 101-104) are skilful paintings but have little merit beyond mere gallantry and prettiness.

FRANÇOIS BOUCHER (1703-1770), a profuse painter in the style of Watteau, cannot be fairly judged by the two examples in the National Gallery, and those who wish to appreciate his decorative excellence must go either to the Wallace Collection or to Ken Wood. Boucher was an ardent admirer of Watteau's pastoral 'genre' and engraved many of his more famous works.

Our well-known **Pan and Syrinx** (No. 1090) is not a stimulating picture, and from it we can gain no idea of Boucher's luxurious decoration. The picture reveals a great technical accomplishment and displays a knowledge of the master's style but the conception has a touch of solidity which suggests Rubens rather than Watteau.

A happier representation of eighteenth-century French painting is the **Girl with a Cat** (No. 3588) by **JEAN-BAPTISTE PERRONNEAU** (1715-1783). The elegance of this delicious pastel is apparent to all who see the picture and no profound observation is needed to appreciate such exquisite details as the cat's eyes, the embroidery on the child's dress and the pale pink flowers in her hair.

The prince of painters in the Rococo was **JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD** (1732-1806), and here again

FRENCH SCHOOL

the National Gallery has a serious *lacuna* which makes a visit to Hertford House essential. Our **The Happy Mother** (No. 2620) is a pretty thing, but gives no suggestion of Fragonard's range of conception nor of his brilliant technical accomplishment.

In the field of eighteenth-century French painting, popular taste has always fallen for the pictures of **J.-B. GREUZE** (1725-1805), and, in spite of their superficiality, the **Girl's Head** (No. 206) and the **Girl with an Apple** (No. 1020) always attract a little knot of admirers. For all Greuze's preoccupation with youthful subjects, he fails to extract the quintessence of childhood and represents the child not as he is but as seen through the eyes of a mawkish sentimentalist.

These studies of pretty children and the heartless frivolities of Court life were not, however, the only sphere in which French artists were active, and with **JEAN-BAPTISTE CHARDIN** (1699-1779) we catch a glimpse of a bourgeois society to which the pleasures of the home made more appeal than the gallantry of pastoral amours. But the domestic scenes of Chardin, inspired by the Dutch art of the preceding century, did not excite much interest among the elegant society of Paris, and it is only in much more recent years that this artist has become widely known.

Of the National Gallery's representation of Chardin, the **House of Cards** (No. 4078) is the most popular, but it is, perhaps, less characteristic of the artist's style than the broader and more substantial **The Lesson** (No. 4077).

Our **Still Life** (No. 1258) is, perhaps, the finest work by Chardin in the Gallery and the artist has here infused the plainest of objects with a dignity and interest.



ROOM XXI

JEAN-BAPTISTE PERRONNEAU : A Girl with a Cat

[No. 3588]

ROOM XXI

Chardin was not the first French painter to enter this field of domesticity, for at the beginning of the century the three brothers **LE NAIN** (c. 1588–1648) had launched a style of bourgeois realism. But, skilful as they were with the brush, the paintings of the brothers have often a depressing solidity, as our **Saying Grace** (No. 3879), by the second brother, **LOUIS**, will testify.

Our representation of the French eighteenth century is enhanced by some fine portraits, of which the most interesting are that of the shameless old **Princess Ragotsky** (No. 3883) by **NICOLAS DE LARGILLIÈRE** (1656–1746); the piquant **Self Portrait** (No. 1653) by **MADAME VIGÉ ELE BRUN** (1755–1842), and the well-known **French Boy** (No. 4034) by **FRANÇOIS GÉRARD** (1770–1837).

With *Mme le Brun* we turn the last corner in the eighteenth century and enter into the nineteenth.

London is extraordinarily rich in French art of the nineteenth century and a combined study of the National Gallery and its adjunct at Millbank should provide an excellent insight into this period. Among the early masters of the new century was **JEAN AUGUSTE INGRES** (1780–1867), who still remains one of the most facile draughtsmen in the history of painting. He lived most of his life away from France and became Director of the French School at Rome.

His drawings are Ingres' greatest claim to immortality, but his undoubted mastery in the field of painting can be proved by the portrait of **M. de Norvins** (No. 3291), in which the sitter is represented with all the aloof severity befitting to a Prefect of Police.

Our other examples of Ingres' work, the **Oedipus** (No. 3290) and the **Roger delivering Angelica** (No.

FRENCH SCHOOL

3292), are less important works and give only a faint suggestion of the artist's sense of design and graceful draughtsmanship.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET (1814–1875) is a painter who, with 'The Angelus' and 'The Gleaners',¹ has achieved such an enormous popularity that it is difficult to realize that his life was a continual struggle against poverty. The National Gallery possesses only one example of Millet's work in **The Whisper** (No. 2636), a reverie in the romantic vein and not representative of Millet's genius for the portrayal of peasant life.

The most popular of all French landscape painters is **JEAN-BAPTISTE COROT (1796–1875)** and he has become famous throughout Europe for his silvery trees and misty pools. This kind of work, admirably represented here by the **Bent Tree** (No. 2625), has a delicate suggestion of atmosphere and, were it not for the number of paintings by Corot in this style and for their likeness one with another, they would be considered works of the rarest accomplishment. As it is, one feels that Corot's method often relapsed from genius into trickery and that his aim was to catch the popular fancy rather than to express an intense emotion.

A less-known facet of Corot's art is represented by the **Horseman in a Wood** (No. 3816) and it can at once be seen that the artist excelled in portraiture as well as in landscape.

Corot provides the spring-board from which to plunge into the sea of French impressionism, an expanse of art which the National Gallery does not claim to represent. The French impressionists are more the domain of Millbank than of Trafalgar Square since in the Courtauld

¹ Both in the Louvre.

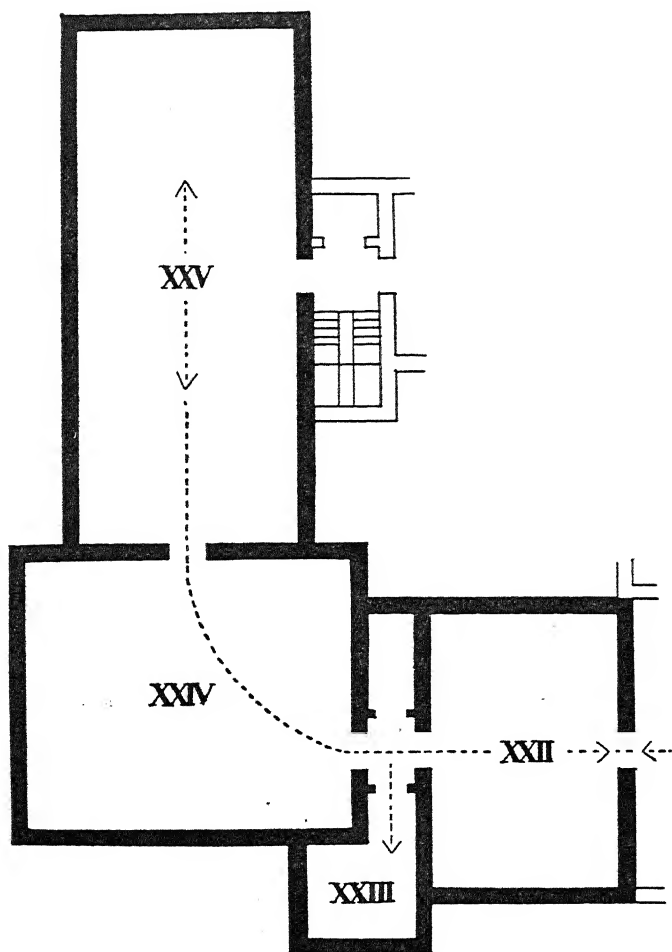
ROOM XXI

rooms at the Tate Gallery one can embrace the whole span of the movement, from the gentle, nebulous Corot to that fierce, tormented and inflammatory genius Vincent van Gogh.

In spite of its many deficiencies in this period, the National Gallery possesses two examples of the greatest of French impressionists, EDOUARD MANET (1832-1883). The famous **Firing Party** (No. 3294A), with its economy of detail, is an arresting work, and it is tantalizing to think that both this picture and the equally vivid **Soldier examining the Lock of his Rifle** (No. 3294B) are fragments of a vanished whole, 'The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian'.

After the stark drama of the 'Firing Party' it is an anti-climax to look at the pallid **Death and the Maidens** (No. 3421) by PUVIS DE CHAVANNES (1824-1898) which has all the anæmic grace of the 'fin de siècle', or at the sober portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Edwards (No. 1952) by HENRI FANTIN-LATOIR (1836-1904) which transforms the atmosphere of the room from one of intense excitement to an air of Sunday afternoon. We cannot, therefore, do better, on leaving this room, than to look at Fantin's famous **Study of Flowers** (No. 1686), which, in its sunny brightness, is a cheerful antidote to the depressing, though venerable, respectability of the Edwards portrait.

ENGLISH SCHOOL
ROOMS XXII TO XXV



ENGLISH SCHOOL

ROOMS XXII TO XXV

To begin a study of English painting with the pictures in the next room (Room XXII) is as illogical as to open a book at the last page. It is, therefore, essential to go direct to Room XXV and trace thereby the development of our national painting in its chronological order.

Room XXV, one of the most serene and pleasant galleries in the building, is devoted to the English eighteenth century; Rooms XXIV and XXIII display the age of Turner and Room XXII brings us to the last lap of English painting, as it stood at the end of the nineteenth century.

For the student of the nineteenth century in England and of the art of the present time, the National Gallery cannot help but be inadequate and those who wish to concentrate upon this period should at once repair to the National Gallery of Modern Art, at Millbank (Tate Gallery).

ROOM XXV

The first thought which strikes those who reflect upon the chronology of art is the comparative lateness of English painting as contrasted with that of other countries. Those who wonder thus are not entirely right for, in the Middle Ages, art flourished as strongly in England as abroad and painting (always under the domain of the Church) was an important facet of artistic activity. The destruction of nearly all our mediæval ecclesiastical paintings under the wave of puritan iconoclasm which later swept through England

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is one of the irreparable losses in the history of the arts and it is only of recent years that the research of certain scholars and some important exhibitions have made the public aware that any English painting existed before the eighteenth century or that any of our mediæval works (alas, how few!) remain for us to-day.¹ In the Middle Ages, the painting of such schools as those of Winchester and Canterbury had more than a local reputation and were admired in many parts of the Continent.

From the beginning of the Renaissance, English painters fell into disrepute in England and no artist who had not a foreign name received patronage in influential circles. Under Henry VIII, Germany was the mode and Holbein became the painter to the Court. With Charles I, none could hold a candle to the great Flemings, Rubens and Van Dyck,² whereas, in the Restoration, the artist who drew all London to his studio was a Dutchman, **SIR PETER LELY (1618-1680)**, a native of Utrecht.

The National Gallery possesses no example of Lely's portraits of the society beauties who flocked incessantly to his workshop, but our portrait of **Frans van Helmont** (No. 3583) is perhaps more interesting since not only is it a telling representation of a well-known Flemish alchemist but it bears a curious and half-faded

¹ The most monumental relics of English mediæval painting are the Roundel in the Bishop's Chapel at Chichester, the Portrait of Richard II in Westminster Abbey and the Wall Paintings by William Baker (active between 1479 and 1488) in Eton College Chapel.

² Van Dyck's English period is superbly represented in this room by the famous portrait of **Charles I on Horseback** (No. 1172).

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inscription recording that Van Helmont embalmed the body of Anne, Countess of Conway and kept her lying in state with a glass over her face until the return of her absent husband.

In the reigns of William III and Queen Anne the prejudice against native talent still continued and all painters, to be successful, had to be foreign. **SIR GODFREY KNELLER (1646-1723)**, a northern German from Lübeck, continued the fashionable portraiture of Lely. Kneller's dexterous accomplishment in this sphere of painting is well represented in our masterly portrait of the Marquess of Tweeddale (No. 3272), whose substantial appearance does justice to the reputation of the contemporary Whitehall for its love of good-living and bibulous conviviality.

The incessant cult of things foreign in England met the life-long disapproval of the father of modern English painting, **WILLIAM HOGARTH (1697-1764)**. The satiric genius of this son of a North-country school-master burst like a thunderclap upon the arid plains of native pictorial talent. From his earliest efforts, Hogarth's work was infused with a strong didactic element and nothing to him was of value unless it could point a moral. In his more youthful days, as apprentice to a London engraver in silver-plate, Hogarth used to amuse himself by making satirical prints of London society and, later, he electrified a seemingly hardened and dissolute public with a series of instructive engravings contrasting the respective rewards of vice and virtue.

The moralities of Hogarth quickly achieved fame and the publication of his prints of London Life, touching all classes of society, were as eagerly awaited by his

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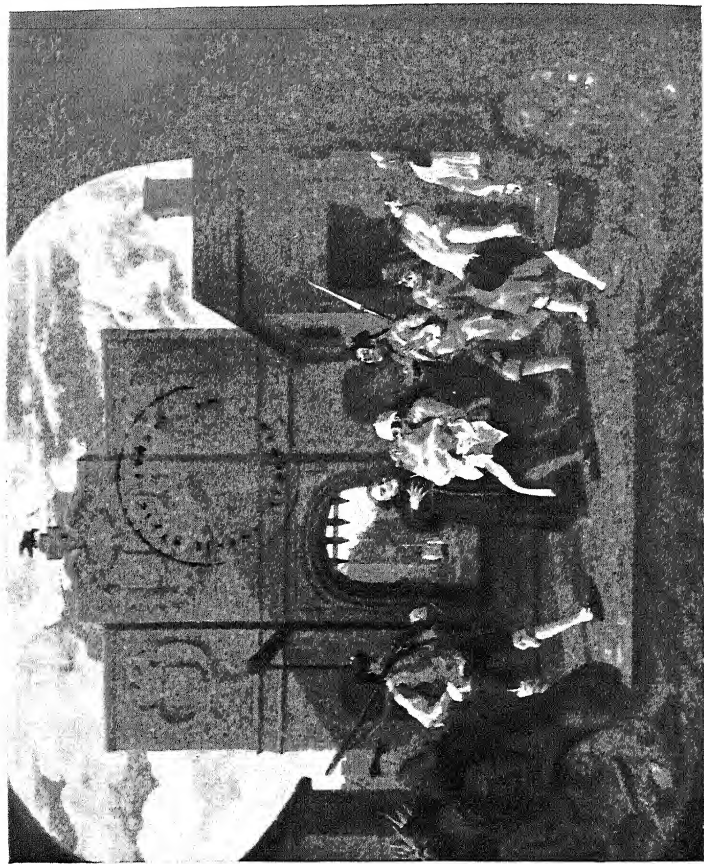
contemporaries as are new copies of 'Punch' by some of us to-day. The artist's genius did not, however, lie only in his talent for exposing a topical defect, and his æsthetic accomplishment far transcended the earthy confines of mere illustration and entered the airy spaces of great art.

Hogarth's dominating passion was his hatred of foreigners and a contempt for the snobbish encouragement in England of things from abroad. He fostered a lasting feud with his master, **SIR JAMES THORNHILL**¹ (1676-1734), for his painting in the 'Grand Style', and he continually satirized the architect and painter, William Kent, for his insistence upon the manners and methods of Italy.

Hogarth's patriotic sentiments are most divertingly expressed in his famous **Calais Gate** or the **Roast Beef of Old England** (No. 1464). This picture is painted not only in deliberate derision of the foreign cult but also as a reflection of the artist's unfortunate experiences in his one and only venture across the Channel. Hogarth went once to Calais and the high horse of his prejudice was immediately overthrown by his being arrested as a spy for sketching near the city gates. In the National Gallery's picture, we see Hogarth, with the gendarme's hand already upon his shoulder, sketching, with patriotic ardour, the arrival of some prime English beef without which the miserable denizens of the French port could not, of course, exist!

This unique excursion from England left Hogarth

¹ Represented in the National Gallery (Reference Section) by the **Miracle of Saint Francis** (No. 1844), an accomplished, if pretentious, excursion into Italianate decoration.



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WILLIAM HOGARTH: Calais Gate

No. 1361

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with a very bad impression of France and he wrote in his memorandum that, in France, there was a farcical pomp of war, a pretentious parade of religion, a humiliating poverty and an unwholesome prosperity among the priesthood. These national demerits are respectively indicated, in the picture, by the group of ragged emaciated soldiers, the procession of priests taking the last Communion to some dying person further down the street, the group of dirty leather-faced fishwives haggling over their last catch, and the ample figure of the greedy old monk, who is prodding the meat in eager anticipation whilst the starving soldiers look on.

The painting of the 'Calais Gate' is as remarkable as the conception which it involves and, curiously enough, its technical method (though Hogarth would have been the last to admit it) reflects the influence of the Italian artist Canaletto, who had already been in England three years and whose artistic stimulus was widespread and irresistible.

The picture shows a surprising feeling for nature; the carrion crow, perched on the summit of the Calais Gate, makes a macabre silhouette against the pearl-pink of the early morning clouds.

Nothing could be in greater contrast to the 'Calais Gate' than the **Family Group** (No. 1153) in which the squalid society of a Calais underworld is replaced by the politeness of some London family, primly conversing over the teacups.

Hogarth's sureness of hand and racy enthusiasm enabled him to produce many dexterous sketches, and his famous **Shrimp Girl** (No. 1162) allows him to rank among the world's most brilliant impressionists and most sympathetic observers of human character.

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In spite of his humble beginning as a silversmith's apprentice, Hogarth lived to be a man of wealth and his house in Leicester Fields (now the school at the end of the east side of Leicester Square) was run by six servants. Hogarth is one of the few painters who have troubled to immortalize his staff and the well-known picture of **Hogarth's Servants** (No. 1374) must have aroused the envy of many a jaded householder who has spent much time and energy upon seeking a suite of retainers only a quarter as trusty and as treasured as Hogarth's famous sextette.

An artist whose name is often associated with Hogarth is **JOSEPH HIGHMORE** (1692-1780), of whose work the National Gallery possesses two small subject pictures, the **Illustrations to Pamela** (Nos. 3573/3576), which, for all their accomplishment, are lukewarm beside the Hogarths and seem little more than competent illustrations to a famous novel. Were it not for the fairly recent acquisition of the masterly portrait of a **Gentleman in Murrey-Brown Velvet** (No. 4107) our representation of this fine artist would fail to grant him his deserts.

Another elegant exponent of conversational portraiture was **ARTHUR DEVIS** (1708-1787) whose talent for stiff decoration is excellently represented in this room by the crisply painted **Portrait of a Lady in a Park** (No. 3317). The lady seems to be whiling away her morning walk by winding thread upon an ivory shuttle.

With Hogarth and Highmore, the foundation-stones of British painting were most firmly laid, but nothing could have been in greater contrast to the convulsive genius of Hogarth than that of his suave successor

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and younger contemporary, SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-1792).

The only common link which Reynolds shared with Hogarth was that they were both schoolmasters' sons, but even that relation was only superficial. Hogarth's father was a poor teacher from a Westmorland village, whereas Reynolds was the son of a well-to-do country clergyman, the headmaster of the Grammar School of Plymouth Earl in Devonshire. A curious incident is associated with the early days of the future master of English portraiture, for although Reynolds's father had always intended that his son should be baptized Joshua, the child was entered in the baptismal register as Joseph Reynolds. No notice, however, was taken of this clerical error, and the boy was called Joshua as arranged.

Reynolds was brought up in the quiet conventionality of a country parsonage and was given a respectable and decent education. His father, though he had his eccentricities and was inclined towards clairvoyance and astrology, was decidedly practical in his intentions for his son and desired him to become an apothecary. He much disliked the early artistic tendencies which he detected in the young Joshua and he constantly reproached the boy for drawing during his lesson hours. We have, to this day, a perspective sketch made on the back of a Latin exercise upon which his father wrote, 'Done by Joshua in school, out of pure idleness'.

Despite this rigorous parental training, Joshua's artistic inclinations were not suppressed. At the age of twelve, he painted his first portrait and later he went to London as a pupil of Thomas Hudson, a fashionable portrait painter of the day. Hudson, however, was

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jealous of his young apprentice and drove him from his house.

Reynolds's artistic training was a wide one; he studied art in Paris and Rome and, upon his return from Italy in 1752, he opened a studio in St. Martin's Lane. From the first, Reynolds had no lack of fashionable clients and his career was one of undisturbed success. The climax of his fame arrived when in 1769 he was appointed the first President of the newly-founded Royal Academy. A few months later he was knighted by the King.

Sir Joshua was a man of untiring energy and he allowed nothing to interfere with his daily programme of work. On the day of his investiture, he gave a sitting at 11 a.m.; he went to the Levée at 12.30 p.m., and he was back in his studio at two o'clock, hard at work upon a portrait. He lived all his life in London, in Leicester Fields (now Leicester Square), in the house on the west side which is now Puttick and Simpson's auction-rooms.

Inasmuch as Reynolds's capacity for work was great, so was his standard of excellence a high one, and as a boy he remarked that, rather than be an ordinary painter and no better than the general run of competent mediocrity, he would prefer to accept his father's dictum and become an undistinguished apothecary.

Sir Joshua Reynolds is represented in our gallery by many great pictures. One of his earliest works is the virile portrait of **Captain Robert Orme** (No. 681) standing beside his horse.

A rarer insight into character is shown in the portrait of **Anne, Countess of Albemarle** (No. 1259) which, for all its faded flesh-tints, is a penetrating representation of an English aristocrat whose countenance is

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instinct with an arrogant intelligence. The picture is painted with an extraordinary technical refinement and Reynolds has lavished as much care upon the accessories of the lady's needlework—the scissors, her work-basket, the shuttle in her hands—as upon her skirt of silvery-blue brocade.

This pallid portrait is the antithesis of the brilliant and much later portrait of Lady Cockburn and her Children, with a Macaw (No. 2077), a colour symphony in white and gold and scarlet, which aroused the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy to such a pitch of enthusiasm that they burst into applause as the picture was brought into the room.

One of the most dominating pictures in this gallery is Reynolds's large portrait group of the Three Graces adorning the Statue of Hymen (No. 79). This is a fanciful portrayal of the three daughters of Sir William Montgomery, the Misses Barbara, Elizabeth and Anne. Elizabeth was engaged to one of Sir Joshua's sitters, the Hon. Luke Gardner, and it was Mr. Gardner's expressed desire to possess a picture of his betrothed and of her sisters in some emblematic or historical pose. As all the three sisters were engaged to be married, Sir Joshua could not have hit upon a happier thought than to portray them decorating the statue of so propitious a god.

In spite of its damaged condition, the picture is a masterpiece of rhythmic line and refined technique and nothing could be more exquisite than the flowered garland which the sisters hold in their hands.

Sir Joshua, himself, was never married, and, like many kindly bachelors he had a love of children. The famous Heads of Angels (No. 182) is but another fanciful

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portrait since, for all its celestial circumstance, it is no more than a thinly disguised study of the head of Frances Isabella, the daughter of Lord William Gordon, in various attractive poses.

The equally famous **Age of Innocence** (No. 307) has a more lasting fascination than the Angels' Heads. This little portrait of Miss Theophila Gwatkin, a grand-niece of the artist, is one of the most tenderly conceived child studies in the history of painting. Reynolds's adroitness in tucking the little figure into so perfect a pyramidal design is a certain proof of his subtle intelligence and consummate craftsmanship.

An equally brilliant composition is the portrait of **Two Gentlemen** (No. 754), a picture painted in emulation of Van Dyck. The gentleman on the left, the Rev. George Huddesford, is dressed in a Van Dyck costume and he and his friend, Mr. J. C. W. Bampffield (who holds a violin in his right hand), provide the artist with an opportunity for indulging in a fine contrast of type.

After the nervous refinement of the 'Two Gentlemen', the portrait of the blatant **Lord Heathfield** (No. 111) may well come as a shock. But the surprise is not unpleasant, since, in this stirring representation of the famous old soldier who holds in his hands the keys of Gibraltar which he defended for four years against the combined armies of France and Spain, we have one of the most monumental examples of Reynolds's mature portraiture.

Sir Joshua Reynolds did not entirely confine himself to the painting of men and women and occasionally he would make experiments in allegorical or devotional subjects. Our sole example of these excursions, the

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Holy Family (No. 78A), cannot be considered a successful work, even allowing for much drastic repainting, for it has a sweetness which lies on that dangerous no-man's land between the borders of sentimentality and anæmia. Reynolds very seldom attempted landscape or 'genre' painting (although examples are not unknown), but in the Dublin Gallery there are some amusing caricatures which bring him more into line with Hogarth and are very unlike his urbane self.

Reynolds's output was enormous and his average of pictures each year was in the region of one hundred and fifty. Many of his paintings are in a precarious condition (note, especially, the 'Three Graces' and 'The Age of Innocence') and a few have perished beyond repair. Like Leonardo da Vinci, Reynolds suffered from an inquisitive and scientific mind and possessed a curiosity which led him to undertake many unsatisfactory experiments and to use materials which were not always of the most lasting quality.

Almost everything he painted is of the highest interest and much of his portraiture is unsurpassable in its decorative effect and sympathetic insight into character. Even Gainsborough, his great rival, was bound to wonder at Reynolds's accomplishment and more than once he expressed an exasperated wonderment at his infinite variety.

Reynolds's complete antithesis in character—and yet his peer in painting—was **THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH** (1727–1788). Inasmuch as Reynolds was urbane, placid, unmusical, and literary, so was Gainsborough country-bred, quick-tempered, passionately fond of music and a jovial companion.

Thomas Gainsborough was the son of a linen-draper

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of Sudbury, near Ipswich. At the age of fifteen he came to London to study painting under Hayman, and three years later he returned to Suffolk and married a country woman whom he had met whilst walking in the woods. The couple settled at Ipswich where the artist employed his time in painting and listening to music. Had it not been for the intervention of Gainsborough's friend, Sir Philip Thicknesse, who persuaded the artist to forgo his rural life and set up a studio in Bath, Gainsborough would have remained in Suffolk until the end of his days and would have become an unsophisticated painter of portraiture and landscape.

Despite the wrench from his beloved countryside, Gainsborough found Bath a profitable and diverting centre of activity and he quickly amassed a wealthy clientèle in this resort of fashion. He remained in Bath for fourteen years, at the end of which he repaired to London and continued his modish portraiture in his studio in Pall Mall.

Gainsborough's name is usually associated with a genius for brilliant portraiture, but, in reality, this side of painting was not the facet of art for which he cared the most; he painted portraits for profit but landscapes for pleasure, and to the end of his life he remained at heart a landscape painter and a lover of the countryside. 'I am a painter of landscape,' he remarked one day to Lord Lansdowne, 'and yet they come to me to paint their portraits.'

Of our various representations of Gainsborough's landscapes, the Cornard Woods (No. 925) is a characteristic example. The painting of the foliage is here impeccable, but the interest of the detail is too much dispersed to make the design completely satisfactory. A



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SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: *The Three Graces Decorating Hymen*

1866-70

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masterpiece of dramatic atmosphere is the little picture of *The Bridge* (No. 2284), but greater still and most famous of all is *The Market Cart* (No. 80), in which the sunlight plays miraculously among the trunks and foliage whilst the clouds discreetly echo the contours of the majestic trees.

This picture was painted late in Gainsborough's life, after he had lived long in Bath and London, and it shows how persistent were his memories of the Suffolk countryside and how facile and instinctive was his talent for landscape painting.

Gainsborough's early marriage, though humble, was a happy one and he had two daughters, of whom he was justly proud. The earliest figure paintings which the National Gallery possesses from his hand are the two studies of his daughters. The earlier study [*The Painter's Daughters* (No. 1811)] is a charming representation of two children, hand in hand, pursuing a butterfly and it has that cool, marmoreal quality which we last saw with Piero della Francesca. The second study [*The Painter's Daughters* (No. 3812)], of some three years later in date, is only an unfinished sketch, but it reveals a fullness of modelling and sensibility of expression which many more polished pictures lack. The children were to have held a cat in their arms, but the animal still remains a ghost and the outline is only very faintly indicated.

The elder daughter, Mary, had an eventful life (she eloped with a musician), but the younger, Margaret, never married. On the opposite wall to the unfinished sketch of the children and on the other side of the doorway, hangs a much later and very brilliant portrait of Margaret as she was in the early thirties [*Miss Mar-*

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garet Gainsborough (No. 1482)]. A certain sadness is inevitable when we reflect that the child who chased the butterfly has grown into a stern and bitter-looking woman.

Two ever-popular portraits by Gainsborough are the portly **Dr. Schomberg** (No. 684), painted at Bath in 1772, and the beautiful **Mrs. Graham** (No. 2928), most foolishly and insipidly disguised as a housemaid.

More interesting, however, is the huge group of the **Baillie Family** (No. 789), in which each member, old and young, of this colossally tall assembly appears to have taken a sip of Alice's elongating liquid. For all their exaggerated measurements, the Baillies have a distinctive charm and Ruskin was not indiscriminating when he judged the picture to be one of Gainsborough's best works from the æsthetic point of view.

When Gainsborough moved from Bath to London, his reputation was assured, and among the celebrities who flocked to Pall Mall was the great tragic actress **Mrs. Siddons**, whose portrait (No. 683) is one of the most famous products of our English School.

An anecdote is dependent upon this portrait which is not only amusing in itself but illuminating as a contrast between the characters of the rustic and impatient Gainsborough and the suave, unruffled Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Mrs. Siddons, who had long suspected artists to be unmannerly mountebanks, went for a sitting to Sir Joshua Reynolds in his studio in Leicester Fields. The actress was to be painted as Melpomene and she was delighted, on her arrival, to find a dais erected for her and to be invited by Sir Joshua to 'ascend her undisputed throne and take her seat as the tragic Muse'.

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When the artist had completed the picture (which now hangs in the Huntingdon Collection at Pasadena¹), he inscribed his name on the edge of the lady's dress and much pleased the actress by remarking, 'Madam, my name shall go down to posterity on the hem of your garment'.

After her sitting with the urbane Sir Joshua, Mrs. Siddons' preconceived notions of the mannerlessness of artists were at once changed and she soon repaired to Pall Mall to sit to the more easily ruffled Mr. Gainsborough who, with his characteristic frankness and excitability, exclaimed, after staring for some minutes at the lady's aquiline features, 'Confound it, Madam, there is no end to your nose!'

Even allowing for a chronicler's extravagance, it does seem that Gainsborough had some difficulty with Mrs. Siddons' features, for in his admirable and most decorative portrait the least satisfactory element is the painting of the face, which is cold and enamelled beyond all feeling.

With the towering personalities of Reynolds and Gainsborough, the English eighteenth century reached its highest point and even the name of the hardly less dominating **GEORGE ROMNEY** (1734-1802) must be said to mark a decline.

Romney was the son of a Lancashire carpenter and cabinet-maker. It is said that his original name was Rurney and that the painter, on coming to London, thought the other spelling to be more distinguished. Like many great artists, Romney started in a humble way and one of his earliest known works was a sign

¹ A second and inferior version is to be seen at the Dulwich Gallery.

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for a country post office, depicting a hand holding a letter.

All Romney's early days were spent in the Northern Counties, but he soon found that the people in these parts gave little encouragement to a rising artist, so he left his wife and children in Yorkshire and came to London, where he quickly made a reputation. He visited France and Italy in search of learning and inspiration and, even if he did not gain much knowledge on his travels (in his memorandum of his Italian journey he seems to have confused Pisa with Padua), the fact of his having been abroad gave him prestige in London social circles.

His fashionable clientèle in London brought him in a considerable yearly income and he lived in Cavendish Square in a fine house formerly inhabited by another successful artist, **FRANCIS COTES (1725-1770)**, whose debonair **Portrait of a Gentleman** (No. 4387) is a recent addition to this room.

Among the most famous of Romney's sitters in London was Miss Emma Hart, later to become Lady Hamilton. Romney's pictures of Lady Hamilton are numerous (in the region of forty) and he painted her both as herself and in fanciful guises ranging from Calypso and a Bacchante to Mary Magdalene.

The National Gallery possesses one portrait of this famous beauty, in the circular sketch **Lady Hamilton** (No. 1668), but this example gives no idea of Romney's finer talents and it is empty both in psychology and substance.

The most popular example of Romney in the National Gallery (bought in 1879 for the absurd sum of £378) is the **Parson's Daughter** (No. 1068) which



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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH: The Painter's Daughters

[No. 1811]

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is nothing more than a fresh and youthful portrait of the well-known beauty Mrs. Mark Currie. But more impressive is the **Beaumont Family** (No. 3400), which, in spite of its formal arrangement and incoherent colouring, is a masterpiece of convincing draughtsmanship and felicitous play of light. The figures of the two young men on the left could not be more crisply nor more directly drawn and their technical perfection seems to make them instinct with life.

Romney's heyday of success was not a long one and his strenuous programme of work overcame his strength. He spent his last years in semi-retirement, as a hopeless invalid, and he died at the age of sixty-eight after many months of illness.

Even though portraiture may be the keynote of English eighteenth-century painting, the element of landscape, though unpopular, was not extinct. But this form of painting was so unprofitable from the mercenary point of view that few artists could afford to indulge in it. Gainsborough, indeed, could only paint the countryside for pleasure not for profit, and even the now assured father of English landscape painting, **RICHARD WILSON (1714-1782)**, was unable to make a living by his art. Patrons for landscape were almost non-existent in the eighteenth century and Wilson lived and died in conditions of extenuating poverty. The only pounds he earned were those gained in portrait painting for which he showed an uninspired competence.

Part of Wilson's life was spent in Rome, and it was there that he studied the works of Claude and Poussin. It is indeed for his classical landscapes that Wilson is most famous, and our **Villa of Mæcenas** (No. 108) is as romantic a view of Tivoli as it would be

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possible to obtain in paint. But those who seek in landscape an intimate simplicity will be awed by the monumental masses of Mæcenas' villa and will turn with delight to the little picture **On the Wye** (No. 1064), in which we have an entrancing view of Wilson's native Wales.

An even lovelier study is the recently acquired **On Hounslow Heath** (No. 4458), in which the artist seems to have immersed his picture in a film of liquid light.

Very little is known of Wilson's life and the information which exists is unpleasing. We are told that he was a man of intemperate habits—a reputation to which Zoffany bore witness when he painted Wilson with a bottle of porter at his side. Wilson was pleased with the portrait but disliked the accessories and finally induced Zoffany to erase them.

All who look, in pictures, for the representation of familiar things would do well to cross the room and see the famous **Stable Interior** (No. 1030), by **GEORGE MORLAND** (1763–1804), a facile, if inaccurate, painter, chiefly famed for his work as a pioneer of naturalism in England and for his portrayal of boorish rusticity and sleepy English country life.

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At the end of the eighteenth century the scene of fashionable portraiture is momentarily changed from London to Edinburgh where **SIR HENRY RAEBURN** (1756-1823) achieves pre-eminence. This fine, if solid, painter can best be studied in the Scottish National Gallery, but in Trafalgar Square we have the celebrated **Miss Mary Hepburn** (No. 1146), a handsome full-length portrait, conceived in the style of Reynolds, of a lady in a Leghorn hat, and the **Viscount Melville** (No. 3880), a vigorous study of the Home Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty under George III.

A less stimulating painter than Raeburn is **JOHN HOPPNER** (1758-1810). One feels, indeed, that, were it not for his preference for painting women as pretty as the **Countess of Oxford** (No. 900), Hoppner would have run the risk of remaining for ever in obscurity.

A more considerable personage than either of these painters is **SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE** (1769-1830), an artist upon whom all the most noble members of London society bestowed their patronage. For many years the most popular example of Lawrence's art in Trafalgar Square was the **Lady Georgiana Fane** (No. 922), but the brilliance of this charming study of a child with a kid has been eclipsed by the recent acquisition of the glittering portrait of **Queen Charlotte** (No. 4257), wife of George III. The artist has portrayed the Queen, magnificently robed, seated in an apartment at Windsor where, through the open window, we have a panoramic view of Eton College lit by the last rays of a sun which soon must be obscured by an approaching storm.

Another interesting example of Lawrence's work is

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the celebrated portrait of **Mrs. Siddons** (No. 785) which is so unlike the more famous version by **Gainsborough** that the identity of the sitter is hard to believe.

No description of the close of the eighteenth century is complete without a mention of **JOHANN ZOFFANY** (1733-1810), a German from Ratisbon who established a reputation in England through his diverting scenes of theatrical life and his crisply painted Family Groups. Of the former the National Gallery possesses no example, but of the latter none could easily excel the **Family Group** (No. 3678), in which the prolific parents proudly display their five children whilst a negro slave looks envyingly at the kites held by the two sons.

Zoffany's pupil, **HENRY WALTON** (1746-1813), was a less fashionable artist and was content to paint homely 'genre' pictures in the style of **Chardin** whose influence was then beginning to radiate from France to England. **Our Plucking the Turkey** (No. 2870) is a workman-like representation of a scene which would make an appropriate Christmas card.

An attractive artist of this period is **GEORGE STUBBS** (1724-1806) whose **Phaeton and Pair** (No. 3529), though not completely characteristic, bears out his rule that he seldom painted people unless they were accompanied by their domestic animals.

The task of assessing the sequence of painters and fitting them into their correct compartments of time, mood and method is never an easy one and sometimes a personality arises which refuses to fit into any pattern and can only stand alone. Such an awkward personage was that tortured visionary and poet-painter **WILLIAM BLAKE** (1757-1827). It is impossible to estimate



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SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE: Queen Charlotte

[No. 4257]

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Blake's place in painting by any comparative canons since both as a man and as an artist he is unique, mysterious, exasperating and profound. From his earliest childhood he showed visionary qualities; at the age of four he cried because he saw the Face of God looking in at the window; at seven he revealed an extraordinary talent for foretelling the future and throughout his life he soared in a plane of mysticism to which few earthly beings could aspire. Those who attribute his visions to sheer madness are as unreflective as those who say that there is no more in the art of painting than the daubing of pigment upon canvas, and yet those who can share in his personal communion with the Saints and Prophets must indeed be possessed of a sense which is given only to a few.

As a poet, Blake can be either naïvely simple or incomparably elaborate and only the most constant scholars can hope to follow all the way the golden thread of his Prophetic Books. As a painter he is no less difficult, but although few of us can partake of his philosophy, all should be able to appreciate his colour and delight in his genius for translating thoughts into thrilling, elastic lines which seem to twist and writhe with an uncanny life.

Those who wish to study Blake should repair at once to Millbank, where a whole room is devoted to his art; but in the National Gallery we have less opportunity to exploit our taste and we have to take his work as we find it. The **Procession from Calvary** (No. 1164) is far from being Blake's best work and the colouring is irritatingly anæmic. The line, however, is characteristically felicitous and even the body of the dead Christ seems instinct with hidden life—a life, indeed, which

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was to lie dormant until the Morning of the Resurrection.

The **Spiritual Form of Pitt** (No. 1110) is a picture which few can pretend to interpret, and one has to be content to admire the golden lights of the colour scheme and to accept the subject as some spiritual crisis occurring in farthest space.

It is hardly a source of wonder that Blake's art was not a commercial success; his life, indeed, was one of distressing poverty and the only joys he had were those given him by his faithful wife and a few loyal friends. It is only of recent years that his genius has been recognized and, even though his public is still limited, there are few who do not acknowledge his power as a draughtsman and his extraordinary talent as an engraver.

After the troubled fancies of William Blake, it is, perhaps, a relief to turn to that most sober of English landscape painters, **JOHN CROME** (1768-1821). Crome, the son of a poor Norfolk publican, began life as a doctor's errand-boy and later he worked as apprentice to a 'coach and sign painter' in Norwich.

From his earliest youth Crome was interested in painting and he lost no opportunity of seeing the English and Dutch pictures of which Norwich had a fair show. The Eastern Counties were rich in Netherlandish paintings, since not only did Norwich enjoy continual commercial intercourse with the Low Countries but it also acted as a city of refuge for many wealthy Flemish Protestants who had fled from their country during the religious persecutions.

Crome had no artistic training other than the observation of nature, and it was only through his extra-

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ordinary natural skill and indefatigable energy that he was able to leave his apprenticeship and set himself up as a teacher of drawing. His reputation as a draughtsman steadily increased and he later became the founder of the Norwich School (the first provincial school of painting in England) and the master of such accomplished artists as John Sell Cotman, James Stark and many others. Crome was always an admirer of Richard Wilson, but still greater was his love of the painters of Holland and he died with the name of Hobbema upon his lips.

The *Moonrise on the Yare* (No. 2645) is an excellent example of Crome's Dutch method applied to an English subject, but its breadth and solemnity transcends the average of Dutch landscape painting. Though inspired by Van der Neer, the picture has a latent drama which brings it nearer to Rembrandt.

The *Mousehold Heath* (No. 689) is another masterpiece of space and atmosphere, in which the limitations of the frame are broken down and we are faced with some rolling prospect of windswept hills, across which a path recedes into a boundless distance.

Most famous of all Crome's work is the *Poringland Oak* (No. 2674), which breaks through the confines of Landscape and becomes the Portrait of a Tree. This picture is Crome's supreme achievement in the style of Hobbema, but even though each leaf is picked out with a fastidious precision, the general effect is one of majestic stateliness rather than of intricate detail. For this reason alone our modest Norfolk painter may be said to have surpassed his adored Dutch master, though none would have been less ready to admit it than he

ENGLISH SCHOOL

whose dying words were 'Hobbema, oh my Hobbema, how dearly I have loved thee'.

The study of Crome brings us on to the most highly imaginative of all English artists, J. M. W. TURNER (1775-1851). This extraordinary genius came of a highly sensitive family and his mother lost her reason in later life. From early youth, Turner had a love of painting and a passion for travelling; his earliest known drawing was made at the age of nine and his voyages began when he was not very advanced in years. Throughout his life he was an indefatigable traveller and he visited practically every country in Central and Southern Europe. Wherever he went he took his notebook with him and filled it with valuable impressions.

Turner's life may be blocked out roughly into three periods. He began as a water-colour artist and travelled extensively over the British Isles, making topographical sketches for engraving. Later, he adopted a more mature form of landscape painting and imitated the styles of Poussin, Claude and the great Dutch masters. His final period was one of pure poetry; he withdrew from the study of the things around him and turned to the creation of imaginative works, whose only sources of inspiration were the searchings of his own mind.

A famous example of Turner's earlier style is the *Calais Pier* (No. 472), an exciting scene in which the dark-sailed English packet has just been driven into port by the stormy sea. Among the crowd of fisherfolk huddled together on the jetty one can distinguish an old woman in a red dress, who gesticulates wildly to a man in a small fishing-smack.

ROOM XXIV

The agitation of the incident has not prevented the artist from carefully planning his picture so that the curve of the pier leads one's eye directly to the approaching boats. The detail, too, is minutely accomplished and the waves, lashed to fury by the advancing squall, are painted in a way which it would be impossible to excel.

A conspicuous contrast to the 'Calais Pier' is the well-known *Frosty Morning* (No. 492), in which, for all its Wordsworthian calm, one can feel the crackle of an early January frost.

Turner's Claudian period is immortalized, principally, by the *Dido building Carthage* (No. 498), which we have seen on the West Vestibule, and the *Crossing the Brook* (No. 497), a picture painted in imitation of the little 'Landscape with Figures' by Claude which Sir George Beaumont loved so well.

In Turner's picture we stand near Morwell Rocks, and, looking south towards Plymouth, we enjoy a distant view of the village of Calstock with its spired church.

Turner's accuracy, however, is not one of topography and no landscape nearer Plymouth than the Roman Campagna has such a graceful, ordered elegance. Turner has portrayed the distance with an almost miraculous delicacy and in our enjoyment of the enchanting panorama over the valley of the Tamar, where the bridge and water-mill are half-shrouded in a sunlit mist, we hardly see the figures of the dog and the little bare-legged girl, whose crossing of the brook gives the picture its title.

Turner's most glorious representation in the National Gallery is the *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus* (No.

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508), but its success was posthumous and in the Academy of 1829 it remained unsold.

In this picture, the old Homeric legend of how Ulysses escaped from the Cyclops by gouging out his eye with a fiery stake has been transformed into a diaphanous dream of colour.

In the splendour of the sunrise we see Ulysses' galley putting out to sea, whilst on the rock, half-hidden in the morning mists, the colossal Cyclops writhes in agony for his lost eye. Ulysses' ship, with the hero on the prow and the sailors crowded on the poop and mainmast, bears two flags—one displaying the first four letters of Ulysses' name in Greek characters and the other depicting the Trojan Horse and Siege of Troy. Dolphins and water-nymphs swim before the ship and each of the nymphs has a light upon her head.

In the distance, silhouetted against the rising sun, are the deadly rock and whirlpool of Scylla and Charybdis, through which Ulysses has already passed unscathed.

Incidents of classical mythology and the history of Greece and Rome often attracted Turner as a subject for his pictures, and in the **Agrippina with the Ashes of Germanicus** (No. 523) we see Rome as the artist conceived it—a dream city, bathed in an opalescent light and rising, tier upon tier, above the waters of the Tiber.

A more famous and no less romantic work is the **Fighting Téméraire** (No. 524). This picture, which all the world must know, was conceived and painted on the lower reaches of the Thames in 1838, the year in which the 'Téméraire' was sold out of service at Sheerness and towed to Rotherhithe to be broken up.

Turner's picture has a strong sentimental appeal and

ROOM XXIV

the pathos lies in the contrast between the stately old battleship, which had fought in the weather-line at Trafalgar, and the vulgar, self-assertive little tug which is noisily towing it to its last berth. Inasmuch as the day of the 'Téméraire' is at its close, so is the evening sun about to set and the brilliant lights in the sky are soon to be obscured by the shadows of advancing night.

The 'Fighting Téméraire' brings us on to Turner's final phase when realism had passed him by, and, his fame being won, he was free to practise the experiments of colour and light of which he had so often dreamed.

The Interior at Petworth (No. 1988) is just such an experiment, but we can never hope to see in it all that Turner saw. For most of us, it is like looking for pictures in the fire; sometimes we see much that is marvellous and at other times nothing at all.

A few things, however, are certain. We know that the sunlight is pouring into the hall of a large Georgian house, heavily furnished with family portraits and pseudo-classical statuary. In the background, on the left, is a marble group of the Three Graces and on the opposite side is a long mirror. In the foreground, two lap-dogs have been more than usually mischievous and have pulled down a tablecloth and are now chasing each other among the fallen furniture. This *mêlée* of movement, lost in the riot of light and colour, convinces us that the picture is merely the artist's excuse for depicting a sun-lit room in which the light, whisked up by the particles of flying dust, is broken into prismatic colours of emerald, gold and scarlet.

Those who like to know at what they are looking will quickly leave the impressionist hurricane at Petworth

ENGLISH SCHOOL

for the naturalistic beauty of **Flatford Mill** (No. 1273), by **JOHN CONSTABLE** (1776–1837), in which the oppressive calm of an afternoon in summer is suggested with an incomparable sensibility.

Hardly less refreshing than the 'Mill' is Constable's little painting labelled **Sea** (No. 2656), a lovely, tranquil sketch made at Brighton on a Sunday in January, 1826, 'from 12 till 2 p.m.'

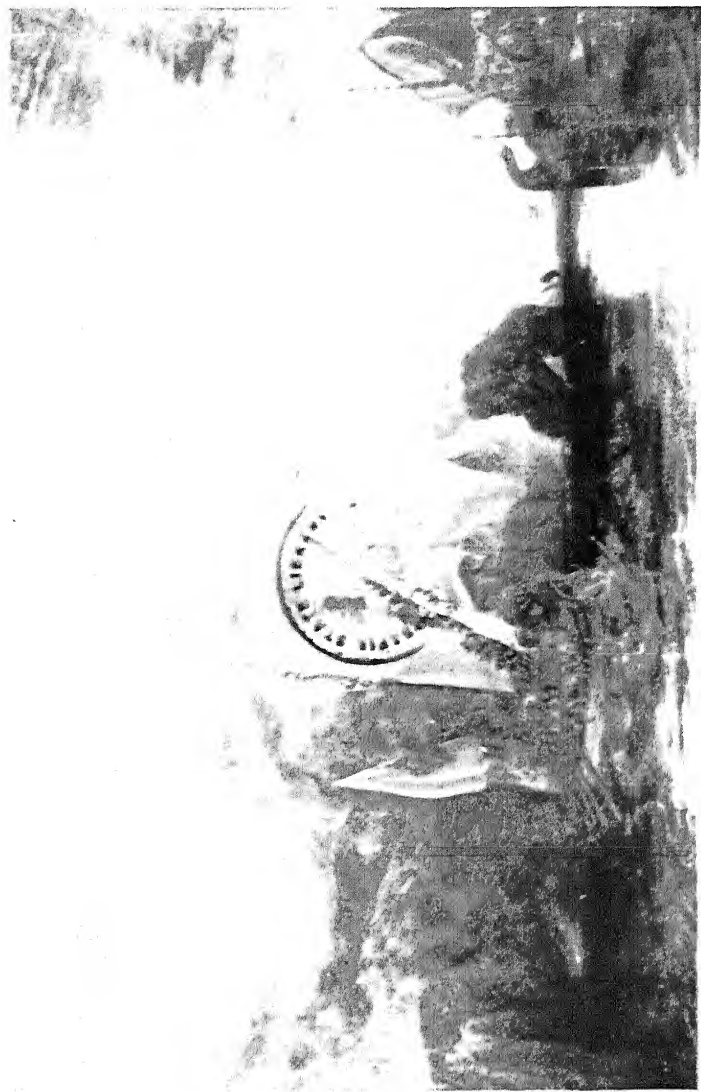
Constable is represented in the National Gallery by many famous works, most of which are exhibited in Room XXII.

ROOM XXIII

The chief attraction of this small room is the series of **Turner Water-colours**, bequeathed to the Nation by the artist and exhibited, in varied rotation, throughout the year.

The room also contains a miscellany of English pictures of the eighteenth century, among which one may note, especially, the little **Rustic Children** (No. 311), by **GAINSBOROUGH**, a sketch for a larger picture once in the Carnarvon Collection; the portrait of **Mrs. Trotter** (No. 2943), by **ROMNEY**; the **Portrait of his Wife** (No. 2655), by **CONSTABLE**, one of the landscape painter's rare excursions into portraiture undertaken purely for mercenary purposes; and the well-known **Windy Day** (No. 2666), by **DAVID COX** (1783–1859), in which an old woman and her dog are most realistically trying to cross the common in the teeth of a blustering gale.

Perhaps more interesting than any of these pictures is the set of **Drawings** by the nineteenth-century artist,



ROOM XXIV

J. M. W. TURNER: Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus

[No. 508]

ROOM XXII

ALFRED STEVENS (1817-1875)—a solitary and pathetic figure who, had he not spent his life in designing monuments for St. Paul's and decorations for the dining-room at the now demolished Dorchester House (none of which were ever completed), would have come nearer to the art of the great Italians than any painter England has produced.

ROOM XXII

In this room we are brought, momentarily, back to TURNER, whose well-known *Rain, Steam and Speed* (No. 538) hangs on the west wall. This picture, representative of Turner's final period, anticipates the contemporary craze for extracting beauty out of modern mechanical inventions.

Those whose eye is observant rather than sensitive will at once notice that the engine is most illogically constructed, with the fire-box (it seems) placed on the outside; they will also remark that the train is a very primitive model and that all its carriages are open to the air. It is, indeed, interesting to reflect that, although this train would seem to us intolerably slow, it must have appeared very marvellous to Turner, in whose lifetime railways were invented and who could remember the days when the wealthier classes had to rely for locomotion upon sedan-chairs.

But the clue to Turner's picture is not its sense of mechanism but its subtle suggestion of the elemental forces indicated in the title. The train seems really to be rushing over the viaduct and its steam is becoming quickly evaporated in the driving rain.

In this picture Turner again delights in the suggestion

ENGLISH SCHOOL

of panoramic distance and our eye wanders across misty stretches of land and water. On the left is a river on which a small boat makes its way towards a bridge and on the right is an open field in which a man is ploughing. In front of the train a hare is running for its life across the viaduct.

'Rain, Steam and Speed' is Turner's last great work. He spent his declining years in London at his house in Cheyne Walk where he lived, almost deserted by his friends, in a state of complete neglect, induced not by poverty but by his own persistent eccentricity.

This room contains some of the finest work of JOHN CONSTABLE (1776-1837), the Suffolk farmer's son, who is the world's most convincing proof that geniuses not infrequently begin late.

Up to the age of twenty-seven Constable never exhibited a picture and, perhaps because in his early years his artistic activities were consistently checked by his parents who intended him to take Orders, his first efforts were unsuccessful and without promise.

The turning-point in his career came with his acquaintance with Sir George Beaumont, who, although he admired Constable, could never quite accustom himself to the fresh greenery of Constable's characteristically English painting as compared with the brown tones of the fashionable classical landscape.¹

Constable's first success in landscape was made by *The Haywain* (No. 1207), which, though mildly received in England, was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1824 and made a universal sensation. This *volte-face* of public opinion was as surprising to Constable as to

¹ Cp. note on Sir George Beaumont appended to Rubens' 'Château de Steen' (Room XV).

ROOM XXII

his conservative English contemporaries, for in the London Academy of 1821 'The Haywain' had remained unsold, and Constable contemplated selling the picture, without the frame, for seventy pounds.

The reason for the success of 'The Haywain' in Paris was its unashamed veracity. For years painters had been trying, without success, to rival Claude and Wilson by the production of pedantic landscapes in the classical vein. It is not, therefore, surprising that Constable's picture of 'The Haywain' broke like a refreshing shower upon the parched fields of contemporary landscape painting, and that all enthusiasts in art were compelled to admire his subtle suggestion of light and air and his intimate portrayal of the calm sky and green grass of an English June day.

'The Haywain' won the gold medal at the Paris Salon and the actual awards are now attached to the frame, immediately below the title-label.

'The Haywain' set the fashion for Constable and people were free to admire unrestrainedly these tender representations of the peaceful English country-side. Hardly less lovely than 'The Haywain' is **The Cornfield** (No. 130), in which a shepherd-boy has paused to take a drink from a stream while his dog waits for him before they drive the flock farther along the path. This painting is perfectly planned both in colour and design, for the dog and the sheep are so placed as to lead our eye directly into the field of ripe corn which gives the title to the picture.

Other beautiful examples of Constable's genius are: **The Cenotaph** (No. 1272), a picture of an imposing monument, flanked by busts of Michelangelo and Raphael, erected to Sir Joshua Reynolds by Sir George

ENGLISH SCHOOL

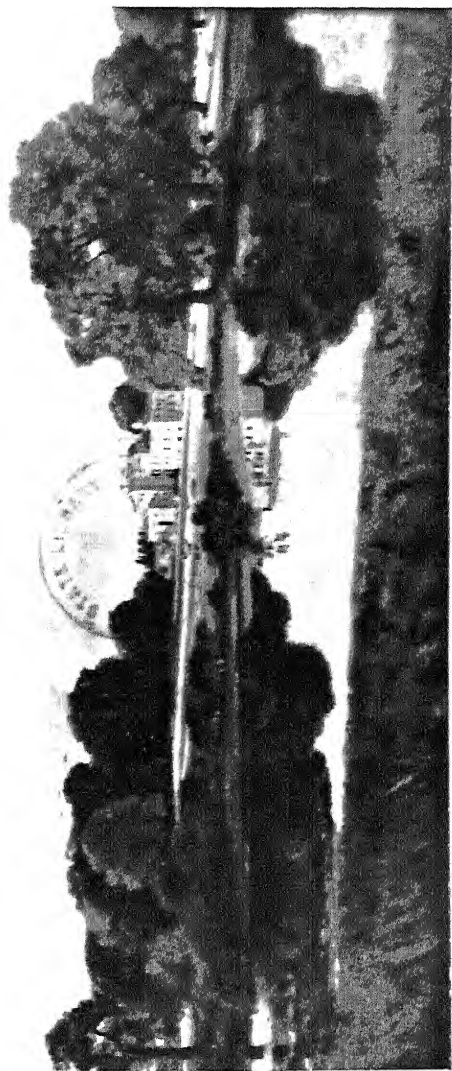
Beaumont in the park of his Leicestershire home; the Salt Box, Hampstead (No. 1236); the dramatic Salisbury Cathedral (No. 2651), and the Weymouth Bay (No. 2652), so full of atmosphere and instinct with the breath of the sea. But none can compare with the celebrated Malvern Hall (No. 2653), in which one can feel the oppressive calm of a late afternoon in summer, when the silence is broken only by the occasional cawing of the rooks.

Constable was the first of our English painters to bring atmospheric movement into his landscape. Even with Turner, except in such stormy scenes as the 'Calais Pier' and other marine pieces, we feel a sort of static calm; but with Constable the clouds really float in the wind, the leaves flutter in the breeze and the rain beats down upon the grass. Is it, then, so very ludicrous that Fuseli used to unfold his umbrella before looking at the pictures of this great genius whose paintings are Nature itself?

After the combined accomplishment of Turner and Constable almost any landscape must seem an anticlimax, but it would be a pity not to look at the idyllic nocturne, Duncombe Park (No. 3572) and at the rhythmic *Wherries on the Yare* (No. 1111) by JOHN SELL COTMAN (1782-1842), an artist of the Norwich School and an associate of the great Crome.

Another artist who cannot be omitted is RICHARD PARKES BONINGTON (1802-1828), a rare genius cut off in the prime of life, whose *Column of St. Mark* (No. 374) presents us with a view of Venice in its full clarity and sunshine.

The next group of artists which demands our attention is the somewhat despised assembly of the Victorians



ROOM XXII

JOHN CONSTABLE: Malvern Hall

[No. 2653]

ROOM XXII

and, in particular, that illogical brotherhood of the **Pre-Raphaelites**.

The name 'Pre-Raphaelite' could not have been more ill-chosen for this 'confrérie' since, not only did the artists who preceded Raphael paint in an entirely different way to the brotherhood which took its name from them, but also the members of that brotherhood had never seen any Early Italian pictures (no painters before Raphael were familiar to the English public until after 1857, when the nucleus of the National Gallery's collection was formed) and were therefore forced to gain their information exclusively from prints and second-rate engravings.

Notwithstanding, in 1848, three earnest young people, Holman Hunt, Millais and Rossetti, fired by the study of Lasinio's prints of the Campo Santo at Pisa, formed a brotherhood, whose aim it was to imitate the æsthetic methods of the artists before Raphael and to represent Nature with an unflinching veracity, combining thereby æsthetic beauty with the highest moral ideas.

Each of this noble triad had his own part to play. Holman Hunt supplied the Puritanical outlook fitting for the moral elevation; Millais provided the technical excellence necessary for a scrupulous veracity; and Rossetti, the poet and man of letters, was equipped with all the trappings of culture essential to the realization of æsthetic perfection.

The brotherhood itself lasted only five years, although its influence and fame was out of all proportion to its significance. In 1853 Millais renounced his membership in favour of more pressing duties as an A.R.A. and Holman Hunt retired to the Holy Land.

The poetic idealism and technical excellence of the

ENGLISH SCHOOL

Pre-Raphaelite programme is nowhere better seen than in the famous *Ophelia* (No. 1506) by SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS (1829-1896). Here we have an idyllic vision of Hamlet's betrothed, floating down the river with the water in her dress and singing as she goes.

Everything is portrayed with a beautiful precision and a marvellous luminosity, produced by a special technical method (somewhat like that of the early Flemings) which the artist invented in order to give his picture a luminous effect. He prepared his canvas with a pure white ground which would give the pigments a brilliant foundation.

The artist's representation of detail could not be more perfect. The emerald foliage of the riverside, the dog-roses in the hedge, the robin in the tree, and the flowers, both on the bank and in the water, are painted with a superhuman workmanship. But a curious paradox arises from this canon of precision and, in his desire to be absolutely natural, the artist became more natural than Nature itself. For days on end Millais would go to the farther reaches of the Thames by Kingston especially to study the scene, but he never saw that in reality it would be impossible to perceive every blade of grass and every little flower on the bush with such a perfect accuracy, and it never occurred to him that, by his passion for exactness, he was achieving a nearness to Nature incompatible with visual capacity.

This craze for Naturalism and a minute notation of detail had already launched Millais in a whirlpool of derision, for his 'Christ in the Carpenter's Shop (now at Millbank)—in which he took his models from the local carpenter and family and copied their workshop exactly down to the last shaving on the floor—was

ROOM XXII

considered, even by such notable and level-headed men as Dickens, to be a ludicrous blasphemy and a lamentable error of taste.

Millais' model for his 'Ophelia' was the beautiful Miss Siddal—formerly an assistant in a milliner's shop near Leicester Square and later the wife of Dante Rossetti. The more malicious among us have spread a rumour that Millais, in his anxiety to attain veracity to nature, induced Miss Siddal to lie, fully clothed, in a bath of tepid water—an experiment from which the lady contracted a severe illness.

In spite of all the absurdities of thought which lie behind it, Millais' 'Ophelia' is a work of undoubted beauty and spring-like effect, and those who appreciate a crystalline exactness will find it an infinite source of interest and delight.

Millais' associate and brother Pre-Raphaelite was the poet-painter, DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828–1882), a man of morbid and brooding disposition and, in later years, addicted to the taking of chloral which brought about his death.

After the death of his wife—Miss Siddal—Rossetti lived in the Queen's House, Cheyne Walk, where he consoled himself with a few friends and an extensive menagerie, including a Brahmin bull, a mongoose and an armadillo, of which the latter pet became the terror of Chelsea and not infrequently burrowed its way into the kitchens of neighbouring houses.

Rossetti, like all the artists of the Victorian era, is better represented at Millbank than in Trafalgar Square, but the two pictures in the National Gallery are sufficient to show that he was not entirely Pre-Raphaelite since he did not possess the technical exact-

ness and minute research of detail essential for a completely veracious representation of nature.

Fazio's Mistress (No. 3055) is a lovely colour-scheme in white, gold and turquoise, but the type of languid, full-blown beauty which Rossetti made his own is likely to be limited in appeal.

Ecce Ancilla Domini (No. 1210), perhaps Rossetti's masterpiece, is a restrained and beautiful composition, revealing the artist's genius for pure colouring. The flames on the angel's feet and the lilies worked on the crimson embroidery, stretched on a frame at the foot of the Virgin's bed, could not be more gracefully portrayed.

Rossetti's curious conception of this most familiar subject has an infinite attraction, and it is, perhaps, interesting to reflect that his model for the timid Virgin was his sister Christina, whose poetry excelled that of her brother, in its tender simplicity.

Rossetti's picture of the Annunciation has a clarity of design which suggests a Japanese print. But even more Oriental in character was the work of his friend, **JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER** (1834-1903), an American by birth but universally accepted as an associate of the British School.

Whistler had always been interested in Oriental art and he did much to make the beauties of Japanese painting more widely known. Of our three examples of his art, his earliest work, the **Little White Girl** (No. 3418), reveals a double influence, and although the colouring and details (note the fan; the vase on the mantelpiece; the azaleas in the corner) are Japanese in feeling, the general conception is Victorian and marks the influence of Rossetti.



ROOM XXII

WILLIAM POWELL FRITH: *The Derby Day* (Detail)

[No. 615]

ROOM XXII

But with the **Fire Wheel** (No. 3419) and the **Cremorne Lights** (No. 3420) we see Whistler's complete subjection to the art of Japan; in the former picture we regard what might be some firework fête at Tokio, whilst in the latter Whistler has transformed the Thames at Chelsea into a nebulous lagoon.

After the delicate arabesques of Whistler, it is rather a shock to contemplate the strident exoticism of **The Siesta** (No. 3594) by **J. F. LEWIS** ((1805–1876), or the pedestrian competence of **FORD MADDOX BROWN** (1821–1893), whose **Christ Washing Peter's Feet** (No. 1394) was painted under the ægis of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

It is, indeed, with relief that one turns to the lovely portrait by **ALFRED STEVENS** (1817–1875) of **Mrs. Mary Ann Collmann** (No. 1775), whose reposeful beauty casts a spell of quiet over the room.

On this wall one may also notice the **Pegwell Bay** (No. 1407) by **WILLIAM DYCE** (1806–1864), a soulless machine-made picture of which the chief interest lies in the fact that the great Halley's Comet of 1858 appears in the sky.

The height of the Victorian age is marked by **G. F. WATTS** (1817–1904), whose large allegorical compositions, **Love and Death** (No. 1645) and **Mammon** (No. 1630), display a fine sense of design and colour. But the artist's laboured didacticism cannot soar very high since it is bound to the earth by a philosophy which is as banal as it is pretentious.

At last we come to the picture which is considered by the British public as a national institution, the famous **Derby Day** (No. 615) by **WILLIAM POWELL FRITH** (1819–1909), which, for its wealth of divert-

ing anecdote and impeccable detail, compels admiration.

The picture is crowded with incidents both amusing and pathetic. In the foreground, a footman spreads a picnic lunch for the fashionable party in the barouche, whilst the little performing boy casts envious glances at the food. Further to the left is a group of pick-pockets, one of whom is taking a five-pound note from a gentleman's tail-coat whilst another is examining a gold watch. Near by are some three-card tricksters about to deceive a gullible victim.

The crowd in the distance is admirably painted and one can distinguish many varied types. On the extreme right is a fortune-telling gipsy, whilst, further back, an acrobat is balancing upon a pole. In the middle distance is a group of bookies—characteristically animated—whilst in the left background a man is wisely taking a midday siesta on the grass, with his hat upon his face.

Those who dislike a painting to be objectively pictorial will have many faults to find with the 'Derby Day'; but even they must admit that its shortcomings are philosophical rather than technical and that no intellectual flaws can detract from the faultlessness of the execution. There is, indeed, only one imperfection in the technical method and that is the lack of open-air effect; the background, indeed, hardly suggests the receding distance of Epsom Downs but has the abruptness of a theatrical drop-scene.

The picture is executed with a metallic exactness which seems to have come from a mechanical process rather than from human workmanship, and one can hardly wonder that Oscar Wilde was prompted satiric-

ROOM XXII

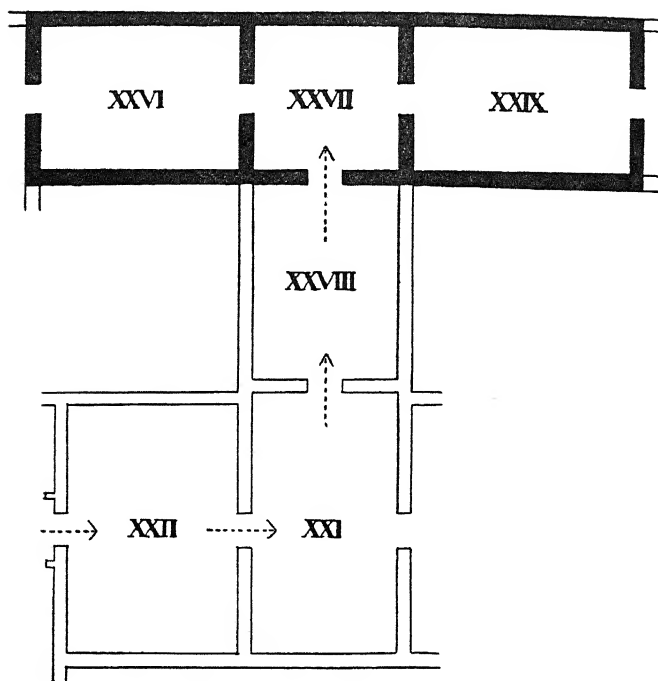
ally to inquire of the artist as to whether the picture was genuinely hand-painted.

The 'Derby Day' is bordered on one side by Watts's 'Mammon' and on the other by WILLIAM ETTY'S (1787-1849) marine fantasy, **Youth on the Prow and Pleasure at the Helm** (No. 356), but neither of these drearily exotic works can suppress the sparkle of Frith's characteristically English scene.

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

[Seventeenth-Century Italian and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Masters]

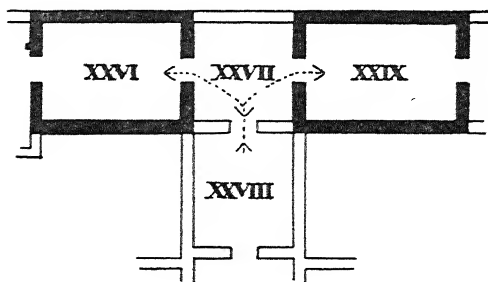
ROOMS XXVII, XXVI AND XXIX



ITALIAN SCHOOLS

[Seventeenth-Century Italian and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Masters]

ROOMS XXVII, XXVI AND XXIX



THE best course now is to cut through the French Room, No. XXI, into Room XXVIII, which is reserved for New Acquisitions or temporary Exhibitions of Special Periods. We then arrive on the threshold of Room XXVII, which is devoted to works of the later Italian schools of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

ROOM XXVII

With the advent of the seventeenth century in Italy, the artistic tradition which had flourished so strongly for three centuries was beginning to wear out and the fine flower of Italian painting seemed in grave danger of running to seed. The unfettered genius of the High Renaissance had, in the new century, given place to a movement of constrained Mannerism, in which the artist felt it his duty to embark upon some pretentious theorizing and to label his efforts 'The Grand Style'.

But as every medal has its reverse, so did this grandiose conception of art have its reaction and a group of painters came into being whose aim it was to fight this barren pomposity by a counter-campaign of Naturalism. As is the way with all reactionary movements, this naturalistic rebellion knew no bounds and, in its efforts to instil life into an empty shell, its methods became exaggerated and its conceptions sensational rather than impressive.

The chief of the Naturalists, MICHELANGELO DA CARAVAGGIO (1569-1609), is represented in the National Gallery by only one picture, the **Christ at Emmaus** (No. 172), but this unique example is sufficiently characteristic of the painter's artistic status to make the lack of more examples seem less of a pity.

The picture has an over-insistence upon realism and, for this very reason, is theatrical rather than life-like. The melodramatic gestures, the violent contrasts of light and shade and the obvious sentimentalities of the detail fit oddly into a period which followed so closely on the heels of greatness, and cause one to feel that the picture is two centuries before its time and that it would have been given a place of honour in some nineteenth-century exhibition.

Another circle of artists who did their best to fight the Mannerists were the almost equally grandiose Eclectics, whose aim it was to pick out the best elements in preceding schools and weave them into a harmonious whole. Their leader, ANNIBALE CARRACCI (1560?-1609), is represented in our gallery by the **Christ Appearing to St. Peter** (No. 9), a stilted portrayal of an unusual subject, and by the surprisingly fresh and spring-like **Silenus Gathering Grapes** (No.



ROOM XXVI

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI: The Entombment

[No. 790]

ROOM XXVII

93) and the **Bacchus Playing to Silenus** (No. 94), both of which represent the Baroque movement in its most decorative facet.

The efforts of the Eclectics did not go far but the influence of the Naturalists was widespread and even such universal geniuses as Rembrandt and Velasquez had something to learn from Caravaggio.

In Italy, the mantle of Caravaggio fell most directly upon GUIDO RENI (1575-1642) whose mood of oppressive sentimentality is shown in the **Coronation of the Virgin** (No. 214) and the **Ecce Homo** (No. 271), of which the myriads of reproductions are better known than the original picture. But, when he pleased, Guido Reni was capable of better things than these and he possessed a finely developed sense of line and movement to which the recently exhibited 'Atalanta' from Naples has testified.

The acute sentimentality in which Guido Reni could indulge is excelled by SASSOFERRATO (1606-1685), whose **Madonna in Prayer** (No. 200), for all its compositional skill, is little more than an essay in waxen imagery.

Almost anything comes as a relief after the sweetness of Sassoferrato's picture, and it is with refreshment that we look at the **Mourning over the Dead Christ** (No. 3401), attributed to MASSIMO STANZIONI (1585-1656), which, in spite of its melodramatic aspect, has a suggestion of stormy grief.

This room also contains some interesting examples of the eighteenth century in Venice, and one may especially note the **Building and Procession of the Trojan Horse** (No. 3318/19) by GIOVANNI BAPTISTA TIEPOLO (1696-1769), whose feathery figures

ITALIAN SCHOOLS

anticipate the *chinoiserie* of the Rococo: the **Rhinoceros in an Arena** (1101) by **PIETRO LONGHI** (1702–1785), in which we see some fashionable Venetian ladies at a 'menagerie', and also some interesting examples of the architectual landscape of **GUARDI** and **CANALETTO**.

An unusual picture also of the eighteenth century is the **Interior of a Theatre** (No. 936) by the **SCHOOL OF THE BIBIENA**.¹ This was long supposed to represent the Teatro Farnese at Parma, but recent research has since discovered that the arms are not those of the Farnese family and the present opinion is that the theatre is not in Italy but probably in Dresden or Vienna.

The artist gives us a view of the pit where the audience, unprovided with seats, watch a performance of Othello, in which the actors seem lost among the spaces of an enormous stage.

¹ At present in the Reference Section.

MASTERS OF THE FLORENTINE RENAISSANCE

ROOM XXVI

THIS room brings us back to Florence and the colossal figures of the Italian Renaissance. The personality which bestrides the age is that of MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI (1475-1564), perhaps the greatest artist of all time. Michelangelo's fame rests upon sculpture rather than on painting, since his professional work as sculptor and architect enforced him to spend more time upon the plastic arts.

His greatest works in sculpture are the many masterpieces which yearly draw art lovers to Rome and Florence, whilst the crowning achievement of his career was the building of St. Peter's in Rome, a cathedral so enormous that it would easily contain St. Paul's. His paintings, though few, are no less wonderful than his other activities in art and his frescoed ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is one of the world's supreme achievements.

Michelangelo left only three easel pictures; one is at Florence, in the Uffizi, and the remaining two are in our National Gallery. Although both our pictures are works of Michelangelo's extreme youth and neither of them is finished, they are yet sufficiently typical of the artist's style to give us an idea of his dynamic power and a foretaste of the workings of his master mind.

Michelangelo's first lessons in painting were taken, at the age of thirteen, in the studio of Ghirlandaio, but it seems that, even then, the pupil's knowledge exceeded that of the master, for we are told that Ghirlandaio was jealous of the boy's precocity and dismissed him from his workshop. This abrupt termination to his

studies could have done the artist no harm, for not many years later, he was adopted as the protégé of Lorenzo de' Medici, a princely patron of the arts who, unfortunately for Michelangelo, had not long to live.

After Lorenzo's death in 1492, Michelangelo left Florence, as the result of a friend's dream, and repaired to Bologna, where our two great pictures were painted.

Up to his departure from Florence, Michelangelo had been trained almost exclusively as a sculptor, and in our **Madonna and Child with Saint John and Angels** (No. 809)—painted when the artist was a boy of nineteen—we come as near as possible to sculpture in paint. The serene beauty of the faces, the geometry of the design with its continuous interweaving of horizontals and diagonals and the rounded modelling of the forms all infuse the work with the purity of some nobly chiselled bas-relief.

The Entombment (No. 790) is an even clearer foreshadowing of Michelangelo's later achievements and here we have a sharp anticipation of the artist's herculean strength and infinite despair. Like the earlier painting, the 'Entombment' is mathematically planned and the composition is cut into sections by a pattern of horizontals and sweeping diagonals which are kept in place by the monolithic figures of Salome and the Virgin.

The artist has impregnated his picture with an extraordinary suggestion of bodily strength, and the inert figure of the Dead Christ is most evidently being supported by the energy of the Magdalene and St. John.

The atmosphere of the Entombment is one of intense suffering but the figures are hardly those of the Bible story. The idea of Resurrection is absent and neither

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St. John nor the Magdalene seem ever to have seen Jerusalem but have come straight from the heights of Olympus.

Michelangelo's picture is unfinished, and the figure of Salome is only half completed, whilst that of the Virgin is merely indicated in outline.

As in the 'Madonna with Angels', the unfinished portions allow us to see the painter's preliminary method in which he imposed the stronger colours upon a foundation of *terra-verde*.

The 'Entombment' is one of the rarest possessions of the National Gallery; it was miraculously discovered in Rome, half-way through the last century, in use as part of a market-stall.

Michelangelo's peer in painting, although so often his antithesis in style, was RAPHAEL (1483-1520). At first, the collocation of this serene and gentle Umbrian with the dynamic Florentine may seem a little grotesque, and not even a glance around the room, which is adorned with a fair sprinkling of Raphael's works, will do much to reassure us. Raphael, however, was not confined to the painting of sweet-faced Madonnas, and in his Roman period, towards the end of his life, he assumed a dignity and dramatic power which makes him comparable only to the great Michelangelo himself.

Raphael's genius was late in its development and his prime was cut sadly short by his early death at the age of thirty-seven. Although he was the son of a painter, Giovanni Santi,¹ the parental influence did not help him much and he was left an orphan in his eleventh year.

¹ Represented in Room I by the **Madonna and Child** (No. 751).

Until the age of twenty-one, Raphael made little impression upon his contemporaries. Born at Urbino, and brought up in the courtly province of Umbria, Raphael was cut off from the stirring activities of Florence and the two years of his apprenticeship to Perugino did little to bring him into contact with the new ideas with which the air of Tuscany was teeming. Once in Florence, Raphael made a superhuman effort to absorb the learning of this centre of science and intellect and, by the time he went to Rome to assist in the decoration of the Vatican, he had most marvellously transformed himself from a modest and slightly insipid genius into a great and transcendental painter.

Alas! the National Gallery presents no satisfactory example of the artist's final phase; it is indeed only by a visit to the Vatican that one can fairly judge the workmanship of Raphael's later years, although the cartoons at South Kensington may carry us one step further towards them.

But in Trafalgar Square one can most excellently follow the early stages of his development, and even these are great enough to place Raphael among the world's most sensitive and tasteful artists.

The earliest work by Raphael which the National Gallery possesses—and perhaps the earliest of all his extant works—is the **Vision of a Knight** (No. 213). This tiny panel, only seven inches square, was painted by Raphael at the age of sixteen and its method shows the care and, even, diffidence with which his early work was executed. Immediately below the painting hangs the pen-and-ink drawing from which the finished picture was traced. It will be seen that the contours of

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the drawing are dotted with pin-holes through which Raphael pounced an outline tracing on to the panel which he had already prepared with a luminous white gesso and which he did not want to spoil with preliminary erasures. This method of 'pouncing' is seldom used to-day, except in pottery-making when it appears to be the most convenient system for tracing the design on to the rough material.

The picture itself is a masterpiece of exquisite colouring and formal composition; the bay-tree in front of which the knight is sleeping evenly dissects the picture and on either side appears a rival vision, the one offering the knight the sword and missal of Piety and the other urging him to take the myrtle, the sacred flower of Venus.

It was not long after the painting of the 'Knight's Vision' that Raphael went to the workshop of Perugino and entered on a period in which he acquired so nearly the style of his master that their works are sometimes almost indistinguishable, as in the case of the *Crucifixion* (No. 3943) which we saw in the Mond Bequest.

Even in the famous *Ansidei Madonna* (No. 1171), painted after Raphael had settled in Florence, the connection with Perugino is not severed and the formal design and poise of the figures are a direct reflection of the style of his Umbrian master. Raphael's two years in Florence, however, had not been in vain, and this picture already shows a strength which Perugino did not possess and which only the study of such masters as Masaccio could have instilled into Perugino's pupil.

The qualities which have given the 'Ansidei Madonna' its great fame are various. The type of the

Virgin herself is not striking, but the figure of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors and little children,¹ has an imposing stateliness. The landscape, too, possesses an ethereal quality and the infinite blue of the sky is wonderfully set off by the chains of red coral which hang from the throne.

The picture was painted for the Ansidei family at Perugia and placed in the Church of S. Fiorenzo. Two hundred and fifty years later, it was bought by the Duke of Marlborough from whose collection at Blenheim it found its way into the National Gallery.

Another picture of Raphael's Florentine period is the **Saint Catherine of Alexandria** (No. 168), in which the pallid colour scheme is fortunately strengthened by the monumental balance of form and line.

In 1508, Raphael was invited to Rome by Pope Julius II to help with the decorations of the Vatican, and it was then that the artist underwent the rich and mysterious change from which he emerged so triumphantly. Unfortunately, none of our pictures in the National Gallery represents fully the dramatic vigour which Raphael had within him and, for his Roman period, we have to be content with the **Garvagh Madonna** (No. 744), a lovely rhythmic design but not very vital in spirit, and the much battered **Madonna of the Tower** (No. 2069) which, for all its damaged condition, possesses a grandeur and a breadth of modelling not so far removed from the nobility of Michelangelo as its outward air of serenity might lead us to suppose.

Raphael's time in Rome was not a long, one but the

¹ Also the patron saint of pawnbrokers. His three golden balls, or purses, lie at his feet.



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ANGELO BRONZINO: Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time

[No. 651]

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years he spent there were of an increasing activity which his delicate health could not sustain. Apart from his official duties in the Vatican and St. Peter's, Raphael was overwhelmed by private orders and in his last years he was unable personally to fulfil all his commissions and relied much on the work of assistants.

In spite of the tragedy of his own health, his art remains entirely romantic and is seldom distorted by any personal grief. It was, indeed, his suggestion of eternal youth that brought him fame and reputation and drew all Rome to his workshop. But Rome was not long to enjoy the fine flower of his genius for, like all those beloved of the Gods, Raphael died young.

Hardly less fit than Raphael to rank among the greatest was ANTONIO ALLEGRI, more commonly known, after the name of his birthplace, as CORREGGIO (1494-1534).

Throughout his life Correggio remained a provincial and he never came into contact with the main currents of artistic activity as they existed in Florence and its environs. The furthest he ever ventured from his native village of Correggio was Parma, where he remained some years in decorating the Cupola of the Cathedral with a flight of airy angels.

Of his frescoes we possess no satisfactory example, and the 'Angels' Heads' in the Mond Room, though they come from Parma, are too damaged to impress us with the richness of his decoration. Of his easel pictures, however, we have a goodly share and each of our examples illustrate a fresh stage in the artist's development.

The earliest in date is our newly presented **Christ Taking Leave of His Mother** (No. 4255), which

the Gallery owes to the generosity of Sir Joseph Duveen.

Even if the dramatic element in this youthful work appears somewhat anæmic, the weakness is counter-balanced by a sensitive design and a show of rich romantic colouring, made all the more luminous by Correggio's use of the then seldom employed oil medium.

Two intermediary and insipid works, the *Ecce Homo* (No. 15) and *The Magdalene* (No. 2512) need not detain us and we can pass immediately to the *Madonna of the Basket* (No. 23), a perfect example of Correggio's human religious philosophy in which the Virgin is no Queen of Heaven but a young mother playing with her Child.

In the painting of the flesh, Correggio displays an unparalleled sensibility and the Virgin's right hand with which she slips the struggling Child into His coat is incomparable in its delicacy.

The *Mercury Instructing Cupid before Venus* (No. 10) is another such accomplished work. Again the artist has exercised his talent for flesh painting and has shown his predilection for portraying angelic forms, for even though these figures are intended for the gods and goddesses of antiquity, they seem far more likely to be denizens of Heaven than of Olympus—and even the Venus has wings!

In a room which is dominated by such masters as Michelangelo, Correggio and Raphael, almost any other picture but theirs is put in the shade and even the work of such a popular painter as ANDREA DEL SARTO (1486–1531) is revealed as superficial in their presence.

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The name of Andrea del Sarto is known to everyone—even to those who never look at pictures—and it is sometimes a source of wonder that he has achieved such fame, unless it be due to the notorious conduct of his wife and model whose vagaries brought her husband more than one *succès de scandale*.

Our famous portrait of the **Sculptor** (No. 690), though conventional in subject, deserves all its popularity and the hard, clear-cut draughtsmanship is fitting for the likeness of one who spends his life in carving figures out of stone.

Del Sarto's pupil, **JACOPO DA PONTORMO** (1494–1556/7), was a facile draughtsman, but his **Joseph in Egypt** (No. 1131) is rather spoilt by its unintelligible complexity. In his aim at evolving some ingenious geometrical theory, Pontormo has forgotten his subject and has left us with a crowd of mysterious figures, among which we can discern a group of elongated young men, some children playing and some strange personages who are engaged in winding their way up an entirely fantastic staircase.

At the foot of the steps, in the right-hand corner of Pontormo's picture, is portrayed the artist's pupil **ANGELO BRONZINO** (1503–1572) whose allegorical composition **Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time** (No. 651) outshines almost every picture in the room in brilliant colouring. This painting was acquired from Italy by Francis I and exerted an important influence upon the School of Fontainebleau.

The picture owes its radiance to the *mêlée* of naked figures, among which one can discern such mythological attributes as Venus' Apple of Discord, her favourite myrtle and her two white doves. But it is useless

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to try to unravel the allegory further, for the artist himself has forgotten its meaning in his delight in pouring a fluent pattern of figures over a ground of ultramarine.

In spite of its frivolity, Bronzino's Renaissance Venusberg has a solemn significance when we reflect that it sets the seal upon the great period of Florentine painting. Before it, painting in Florence had risen in a continual and thunderous crescendo, but, after it, the schools of Central and Southern Italy, though still prolific, entered upon their decline. Nevertheless, the flame of Italian art had not really dwindled, for the sun which set upon the sultry streets of Florence was to rise, with a renewed glory, upon the waters of the City of Lagoons.

THE FLORENTINE SCHOOL

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ALTHOUGH this is the last room we have to visit in the National Gallery, it is very far from being the latest in date and in it we are brought into contact with some of the most dominating personalities of fifteenth century Florence.

In this most progressive of cities, it was rare to come upon an artist who did not attempt to carry Florentine science even one step further by an intense and solemn research; but such there were, and when they appear they seem like quiet islands in a turbulent sea of thought.

FRA FILIPPO LIPPI (1406?-1469) was just such a complacent artist. He was satisfied that Florence should rest upon its laurels and was content to let the stream of scientific progression pass him by.

Theory meant little to Lippo Lippi and practice meant all. Although a friar, he was a lover of worldly beauty and pretty women. His marriage with the nun, Lucrezia Buti, who had sat to him as the Virgin, provoked a round of scandalous gossip in pious circles and the talk was only modified when, in later years, the Pope granted the couple a dispensation of their vows and legally ratified their union.

Our lunette of the **Annunciation** (No. 666) is exquisite in design, colouring and conception. The Madonna receives the tidings in a paved court and the angel's words are confirmed by the Hand of God, from which issues a coil of shivering golden rays surrounding a fluttering dove.

Every detail is gracefully observed: on the back of the Virgin's chair is a golden drapery, shot with crimson

strands and the bed in her apartment is covered with a magnificent brocade. In the centre foreground is a stone vase, of which the base is adorned with the device of Cosimo de' Medici—three feathers in a diamond ring. Even the angel's wings are unusually brilliant and the feathers are set off with patches of peacock blue.

The principal beauty of both this picture and its companion lunette, **St. John the Baptist and Six Other Saints** (No. 667), is the luxurious colouring, in which one pigment is audaciously broken into another, giving an effect of ever-increasing richness.

Fra Filippo Lippi's most famous pupil was **ALESSANDRO BOTTICELLI** (1444–1510).¹ Of all artists of the Florentine School, Botticelli is perhaps the most difficult to assess, for his moods were infinitely various. At one time he appears as a masterly portrait painter, at another he seems to be entirely preoccupied with religious subjects and again he appears the complete pagan, steeped in the neo-classicism of the Renaissance.

The National Gallery is fortunate in possessing one of the most representative collections of Botticelli's work and we can here see the artist in every facet of his thought.

As the pupil of Lippo Lippi, Botticelli engaged himself principally in the portrayal of religious subjects and our early works, the **Adoration of the Magi** (No. 592) and the **Adoration of the Magi** (No. 1033), show him as an assiduous worker in the studio. The former picture, being a long rectangular panel, was perhaps destined to adorn a wedding-chest, but in the latter

¹ His real name, Filipepi, was rejected in favour of his nickname, Botticelli (the 'Little Tub'), given him because his elder brother, Giovanni, had a little tub hanging as a sign outside his shop.

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Botticelli has embarked upon a new form, that of the 'tondo' or circular picture which was almost unknown at the time and was perhaps invented by Lippo Lippi in his picture in Sir Herbert Cook's Collection at Richmond, to which our painting bears a close resemblance.

Another 'tondo', the famous **Madonna and Child** (No. 275), is a later work in which we see Botticelli as a master and not as a pupil. Certain portions of the technique undoubtedly reveal assistants' work and the picture is labelled by some as a studio product. But the foreboding melancholy of the Virgin's face and the sweeping lines of the composition in which everything revolves around the face of the Child are a proof that the master's hand was responsible for all that is most essential in the picture.

As a portrait painter Botticelli was no less accomplished as our celebrated **A Young Man** (No. 626) will testify. This picture owes its acute vitality to the quality of the line: every passage is drawn with a certain swiftness and into the linear perception of the young man's hair Botticelli has infused the electricity of life.

It is as the representative of Renaissance paganism that Botticelli is best known and his 'Birth of Venus' in the Uffizi is one of the world's most famous pictures. Our **Mars and Venus** (No. 915) is a hardly less poetic interpretation of a classical allegory and in it we see the god and goddess reclining after their amours. For once, the God of War, invincible except by beauty, has been defeated and he is lying exhausted upon his emblematic hornet's nest.

The pair are attended by four little satyrs who are doing all they can to disturb the god's repose by playing

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with his armour, crawling into his cuirass and blowing in his ear with a shell.

Again Botticelli delights us by an arabesque of line and the figures have fitted themselves into a fluent pattern of diagonals and half-moon curves.

Botticelli's picture has an historical as well as a mythological significance. The God of War is represented by Giuliano de' Medici and the Goddess of Love is his mistress Simonetta, whose beauty was such that, at her death, they carried her body through the streets with the face uncovered.

The 'Mars and Venus' marks the zenith of Botticelli's Renaissance mood, for shortly after the painting of the picture his character completely changed. With the advent in Florence of Savonarola, Botticelli renounced all luxury and became immersed in ascetic mysticism. Savonarola's cry of penitence induced Botticelli to throw many studies of the nude upon the preacher's bonfire and he plunged himself into a mood of religious melancholy in which he considered all secular art as the vanity of vanities.

In these years Botticelli's pictures became rarer and his art became almost entirely mystical. Our *Nativity* (No. 1034), painted two years after Savonarola's death, is entirely symbolic of the preacher's admonishments. On the top of the picture is a Greek inscription referring to a prophecy of Savonarola in which he states that the devil, now in frenzied activity, will finally be trodden down.¹ In the immediate foreground of the picture we

¹ The inscription, in full, is as follows:—

'This picture at the end of the year 1500 in the troubles of Italy, I, Alessandro painted in the half time after the time, at the time of the fulfilment of the 11th of St. John in the Second War of the



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ALESSANDRO BOTTICELLI: A Young Man
[No. 626]

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can see the devil's being thus down-trodden and disappearing into the ground at the advent of the angels.

The picture is composed in three parts. At the bottom we see the devils escaping, whilst men and angels greet each other in joyful recognition; in the centre we see the Stable of the Nativity, on whose pent-house roof a group of angels are seated; whilst above, in the sapphire sky, a garland of dancing angels circle in the air, swinging their crowns in celestial abandon.

Even after our appreciation of these successive moods, our difficulties are not over, for Botticelli is not wholly seen in any one of them but, in a sense, transcends them all. The real regions of his thought are, indeed, elusive and more mysterious than any human mood can signify.

His work, though infinitely various, has a common link in his sense of delicate colour and his genius for line. There is, indeed, no painting from his hand which is not a linear symphony, and it is this quality which made him the idol of Rossetti's circle and which makes him to-day the most popular of all European painters among the Eastern races, especially among the Japanese for whom line is the pivot of all art.¹

Botticelli's work, for all its tenderness, has its melancholy as well and nothing could interpret his bitter-sweet philosophy more clearly than the famous 'Primavera' in Florence, about which he said, 'Spring, sweet Spring, in one hand you bring us Love, but in the other you hold the bitterness of Death itself'.

Apocalypse, in the loosing of the devil for three and a half years: then he shall be chained according to the 12th, and we shall see him trodden down as in this picture.'

¹ One of the standard works upon Botticelli is that of Mr. Yoshiro, a distinguished Japanese.

Botticelli's best-known pupil was **FILIPPINO LIPPI** (1457-1504), the son of Lucrezia Buti and Fra Filippo. This distinguished painter is represented at his best by the large altarpiece in the first room, but the little **Angel Adoring** (No. 927) has a wistful charm which draws many admirers before it.

Another popular work is the **Madonna and Child Enthroned** (No. 283) by **BENOZZO GOZZOLI** (1420-1498), the pupil of Fra Angelico and chiefly famed for his processional frescoes in the Riccardi Palace. Our large altarpiece is a masterpiece of refined technique, in which every detail (even the chaffinch and tit which stand on the step beneath the Virgin's throne) is executed with careful precision.

The colouring, though brilliant, may seem to some unpleasantly sharp, but it is soft when compared to the work of **LORENZO DI CREDI** (1457-1537), whose **Madonna Adoring** (No. 648) is executed with such a metallic perfection as to set one's teeth on edge.

For many years Lorenzo di Credi was given the honour of having painted the masterly portrait of **Costanza de' Medici** (No. 2490), in which an arrogant young lady is depicted leaning over a ledge upon which are placed, somewhat curiously, a pendant, some pins and a little white velvet bolster supporting three rings. The attribution to Lorenzo has now been waived and the picture is considered the work of **DOMENICO DEL GHIRLANDAIO** (1449-1494).

A picture which has recently achieved a notoriety perhaps exceeding its intrinsic value, is the **Trinity with Saints and Angels** (No. 727) by the rare artist **FRANCESCO PESELLINO** (1422-1457). The picture has a romantic history, for it has been collected together

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piece by piece. The central portion, representing the 'Trinity', was bought in 1863; the two corner-pieces of Angels were acquired in 1917; the left-hand panel of SS. James and Mammes was lent by the King in 1919; and the right-hand portion, SS. Zeno and Jerome, once in the private collection of the German ex-Emperor, was presented to the Gallery by the generosity of Sir Joseph Duveen in 1929.

In spite of its jig-saw existence, the picture retains a striking unity of colour and design; the colours, indeed, are precisely balanced and the Seraphim which surround the Cross are alternately green and scarlet.

Apart from large devotional altarpieces and works portraying religious subjects, such as the **Madonna and Child with Angels** (No. 296) from the School of Verrocchio (a picture which is thought to contain work by the youthful Leonardo) this room is enhanced by some impressive portraiture. The 'Young Man' by Botticelli is by no means the only interesting portrait here and its quality is nearly matched by the **Portrait of a Young Girl** (No. 1230), by **BASTIANO MAINARDI** (1450?-1513), whose serene beauty is an amusing contrast to the academic severity of the neighbouring **Portrait of a Lady** (No. 585), rather rashly attributed to **PAOLO UCCELLO** (1397-1475). This latter portrait, so richly executed and symmetrically proportioned, is an unconscious complement to the picture by Baldovinetti in the first room and provides us with yet another proof that all young ladies of severe features and lofty foreheads should be portrayed in profile.

A moving representation of ancient legend is the **Death of Procris** (No. 698) by **PIERO DI COSIMO**

(1462-1521). Here we see the bride of Cephalus attended in death by a satyr and the faithful dog Laelaps. The circumstances which led to her death were due to the machinations of Aurora, the Dawn, who, being herself in love with Cephalus, told Procris that her husband, when out hunting, spent his time in faithless amours. The bride, to prove the story, hid in the bushes near the spot where Cephalus was marking his quarry and was accidentally hit by her husband's wedding-gift, the javelin which never missed its mark.

In this picture Cephalus has departed; the dead Procris is being watched over by the sorrowful Laelaps, whose eyes reveal a full knowledge of the tragedy and by a satyr who, knowing nothing of life or death, looks wonderingly at the dead girl.

The satyr, indeed, were it not for his ignorance, might well be symbolic of the artist himself who was noted for his whimsical character and naïve eccentricity. In almost every picture Piero shows a fascination for imaginary persons and fantastic animals and 'The Death of Procris' is no exception to his rule, for, on the shore in the background, are all manner of curious birds and beasts.

But the interest of Piero's picture is not entirely exotic and the austere design reveals an intellectual restraint which was, after all, the golden thread around which the whole of Florentine art was woven. It cannot, therefore, be unfitting to end our wanderings in the High Renaissance by contemplating this idyllic fantasy of Procris' death, in a landscape which has all the stillness of a summer's afternoon.

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